

# **Perceptions of Hazing and Bullying among U.S. Military Service Members**



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## **Perceptions of Hazing and Bullying among U.S. Military Service Members**

**BLUF:** Efforts to enhance the welfare of U.S. Military Service Members (SMs) have led to increased awareness of and attention to hazing and bullying behaviors perceived by SMs. Using the Defense Management Equal Opportunity Institute (DEOMI) Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS), perceptions of hazing and bullying among SMs of all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces (except Coast Guard) were explored. Findings of this study indicate SMs report perceptions of bullying at a substantially higher rate than hazing. Additionally, perceptions of bullying and hazing can vary considerably by gender, race, rank, and deployment status. Men are more likely to report perceptions of hazing within a unit than are women, whereas these differences were less clear-cut with regard to perceptions of bullying. Racial minorities SMs are more likely than the racial majority (White/Caucasian) to report perceptions of hazing and bullying; junior enlisted SMs report higher perceptions of hazing and bullying than senior enlisted SMs or officers; and SMs deployed within the Continental United States (CONUS) report higher perceptions of hazing and bullying than those not deployed or those deployed outside of the Continental United States (OCONUS). SMs who chose not to report their race had the highest perceptions of both hazing and bullying relative to other SMs. Overall, the group most likely to report both hazing and bullying were those deployed CONUS who did not report their race followed by junior enlisted SMs deployed CONUS.

**Methods:** Researchers within the DEOMI Hope Research Center (HRC) received Institutional Review Board approval to conduct archival research. The purpose was to investigate perceptions of hazing and perceptions of bullying, the latter referred to as “demeaning behaviors”, among SMs using DEOCS data from January 1, 2015 to June 1, 2015 (see McGuire, Form RPT-12-2015). DEOCS data were requested from the internal Research DEOCS Team using an approved

DEOCS Data Request Form. DEOCS data at this time do not currently measure prevalence rates (e.g., “I experienced bullying daily”) and instead measure *perceptions* of particular events occurring within a unit (e.g., “Newcomers are harassed or humiliated...”). DEOCS data for these analyses included 1,030,336 individually recorded survey responses. Reserve, Guard, Civilian, and Coast Guard respondents were excluded from the sample, thus resulting in 620,629 Active Duty remaining participants for these exploratory analyses.

SMs were asked to provide their gender (male or female), rank (Junior Enlisted, Senior Enlisted, Junior Officer, and Senior Officer), deployment status (Not Deployed, Deployed CONUS, and Deployed OCONUS), and race. Race was separated into racial majority and minority; racial majority (Majority) is defined as White/Caucasian SMs and racial minority (Minority) is defined as all Non-White/Caucasian SMs. Hazing and bullying were measured using 4-point Likert-style scales (*1 = strongly disagree* to *4 = strongly agree*) with three corresponding questions each (see Appendix 1). The average level of agreement or disagreement across all three questions for both scales was calculated. An average of score  $\geq 3$  in response to three questions within each problem behavior indicated SMs agreed (average of 3) to strongly agreed (average of 4) that they perceived hazing or bullying in their units. Only SMs who reported they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statements regarding perceived incidents of hazing or bullying in their units are included in the results.

The cut-off was set at  $\geq 3$  because scores lower than 3, on average, indicated that SMs either do not agree, on average, that hazing or bullying takes place in their units or may even, on average, disagree (average score of 2) to strongly disagree (average score of 1). Because the focus of this report is on perceptions of hazing and bullying, graphs and tables are used to show the highest percentages reflecting these perceptions among SMs.

**Results:** Using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 22 (IBM, Chicago, IL) and Microsoft Excel software, Table 1 displays sample sizes (N) broken down by paired demographic categories (e.g., race by gender). The average levels of hazing (1.66 out of 4) and bullying (2.00 out of 4) are relatively low among SMs. This may lead the reader to believe these topics are not relevant areas for concern; however, when these data are presented in the tables and graphs below, there are clear differences among demographic groups.

For those SMs reporting they agreed or strongly agreed (scores averaging  $\geq 3$ ) that they perceived hazing or bullying in their units, the average level of hazing was 3.17 out of 4.00 versus 3.23 out of 4.00 for bullying, respectively. Employing the 3-point average cut-off as described above, 27,378 (4.4%) of the total SMs in the study perceived hazing in their units and 74,338 (11.9%) perceived bullying in their unit.

A total of 16 graphs and three tables are included to illustrate which groups reported the highest and lowest perceptions of hazing and bullying in their units. All graphs and tables demonstrate the percentages (%) of SMs reporting that, on average, they agreed or strongly agreed with statements from the DEOCS on perceptions of hazing and bullying occurring within their units. Data are broken down by self-reported gender, race, rank, and deployment status. Rank often played the largest role in group perception differences, with junior enlisted SMs most likely to perceive hazing and bullying (see Tables 1 and 2). Gender played an important role in regards to hazing (see Figure 1 and Table 2) and was less meaningful overall in regards to bullying, despite gender differences becoming more apparent at higher ranks (see Table 3). Minority race SMs were more likely than majority race SMs to perceive both hazing and bullying, and SMs deployed CONUS reported the highest levels of perceptions compared to

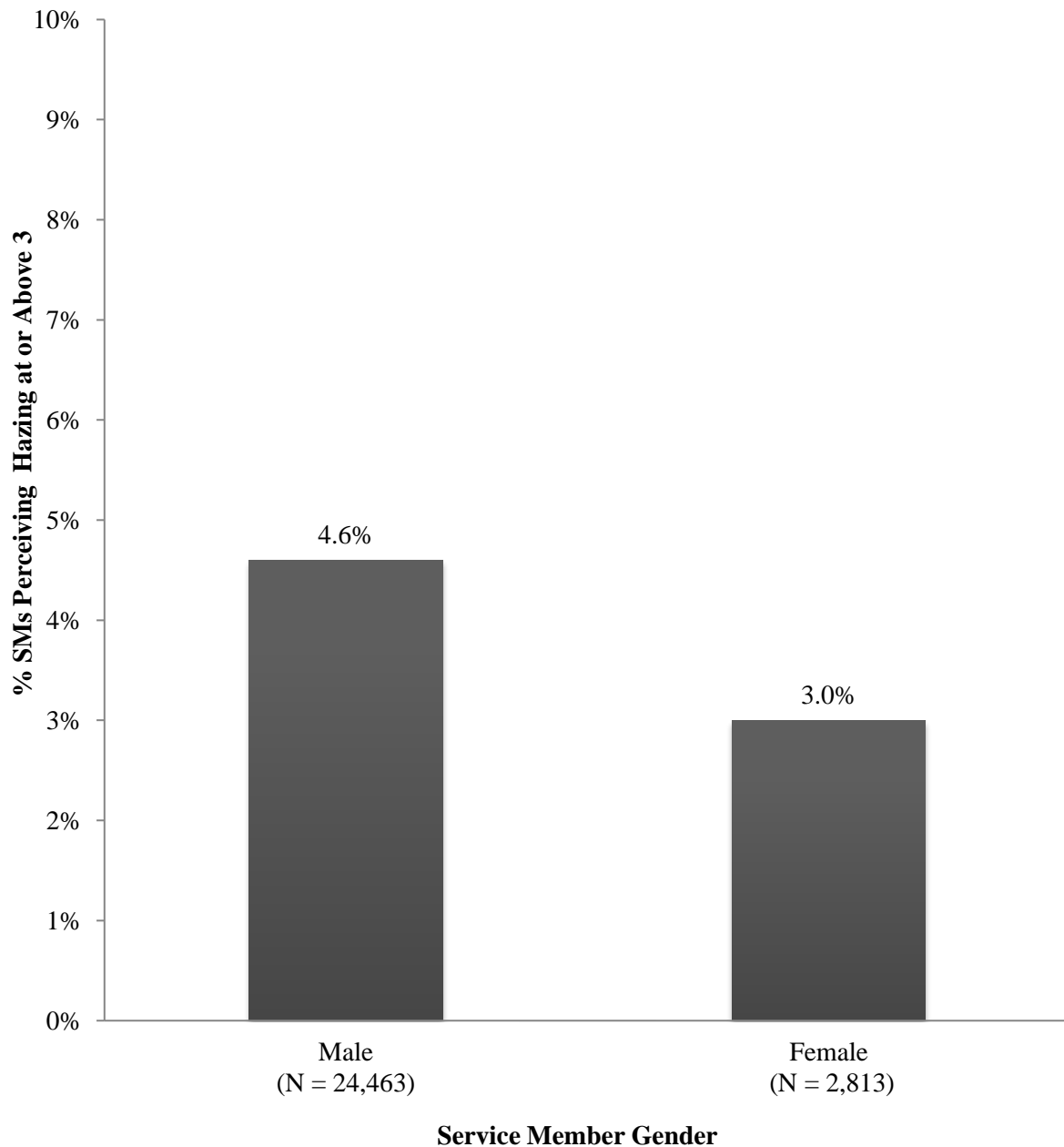
those not deployed or those deployed OCONUS (see Tables 2 and 3). Recommendations are also provided as to how to manage perceptions of hazing and bullying within units.

## Overall Perceptions of Hazing and Bullying

*Question: What are differences in hazing perceptions among male and female SMs?*

Male SMs report greater perceptions of hazing within their units than do females by a wide margin (4.6% vs. 3.0%, respectively; see Figure 1). These differences become more pronounced as gender is further divided into subgroups based on race (see Figure 8), rank (see Figure 10), and deployment status (see Figure 12).

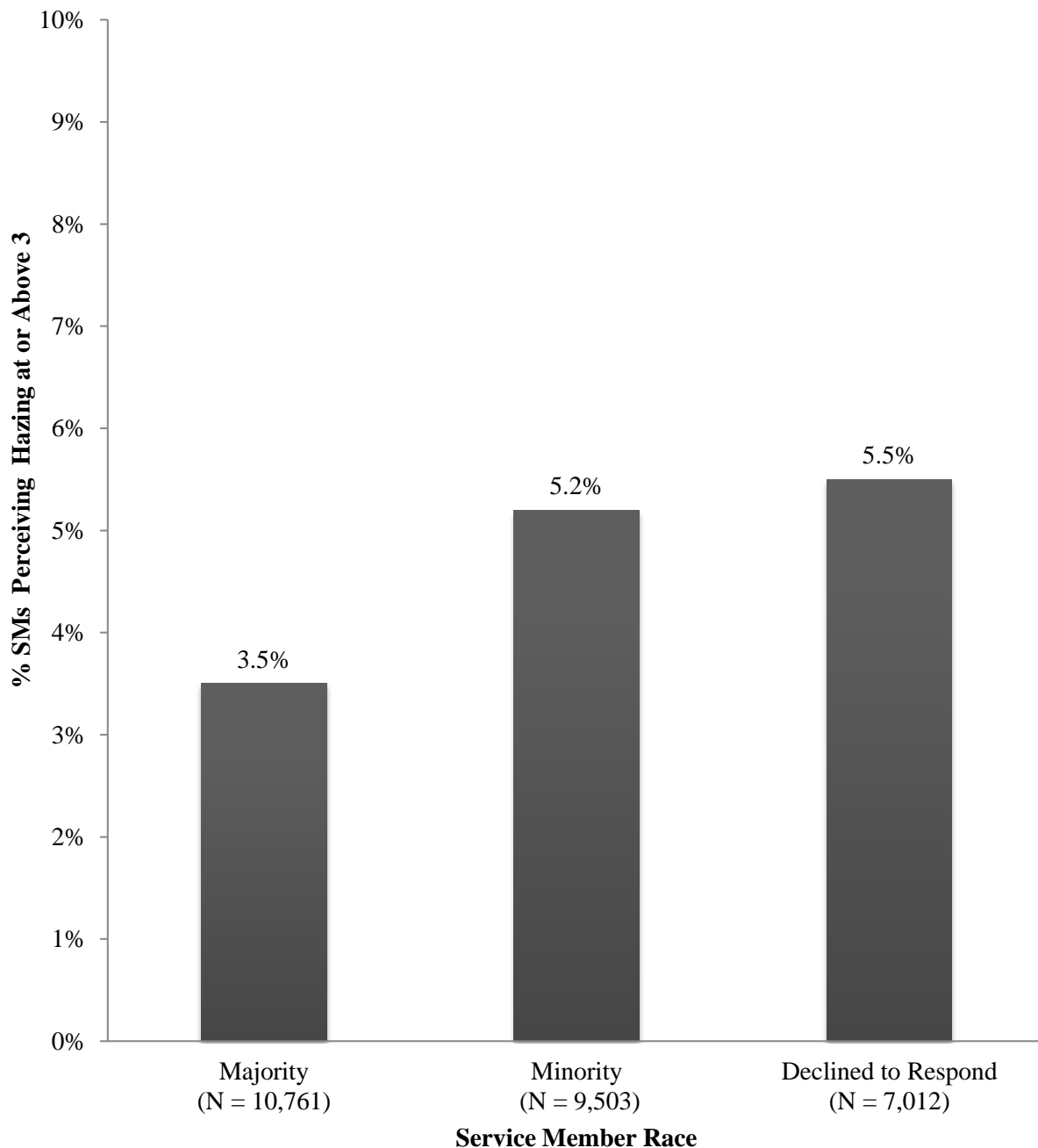
**Figure 1. Overall Perceptions of Hazing by Gender**



*Question: What are differences in hazing perceptions among racial groups?*

In Figure 2, racial majority (Majority) is defined as White/Caucasian SMs and racial minority (Minority) is defined as all Non-White/Caucasian SMs. Minority SMs report higher perceptions (5.2%) of hazing than do majority SMs (3.4%; see Figure 2). A consistent theme found throughout these race data is that SMs who chose not to report their race indicated the highest perceptions of hazing. However, their responses appear more similar to those reported by minority SMs.

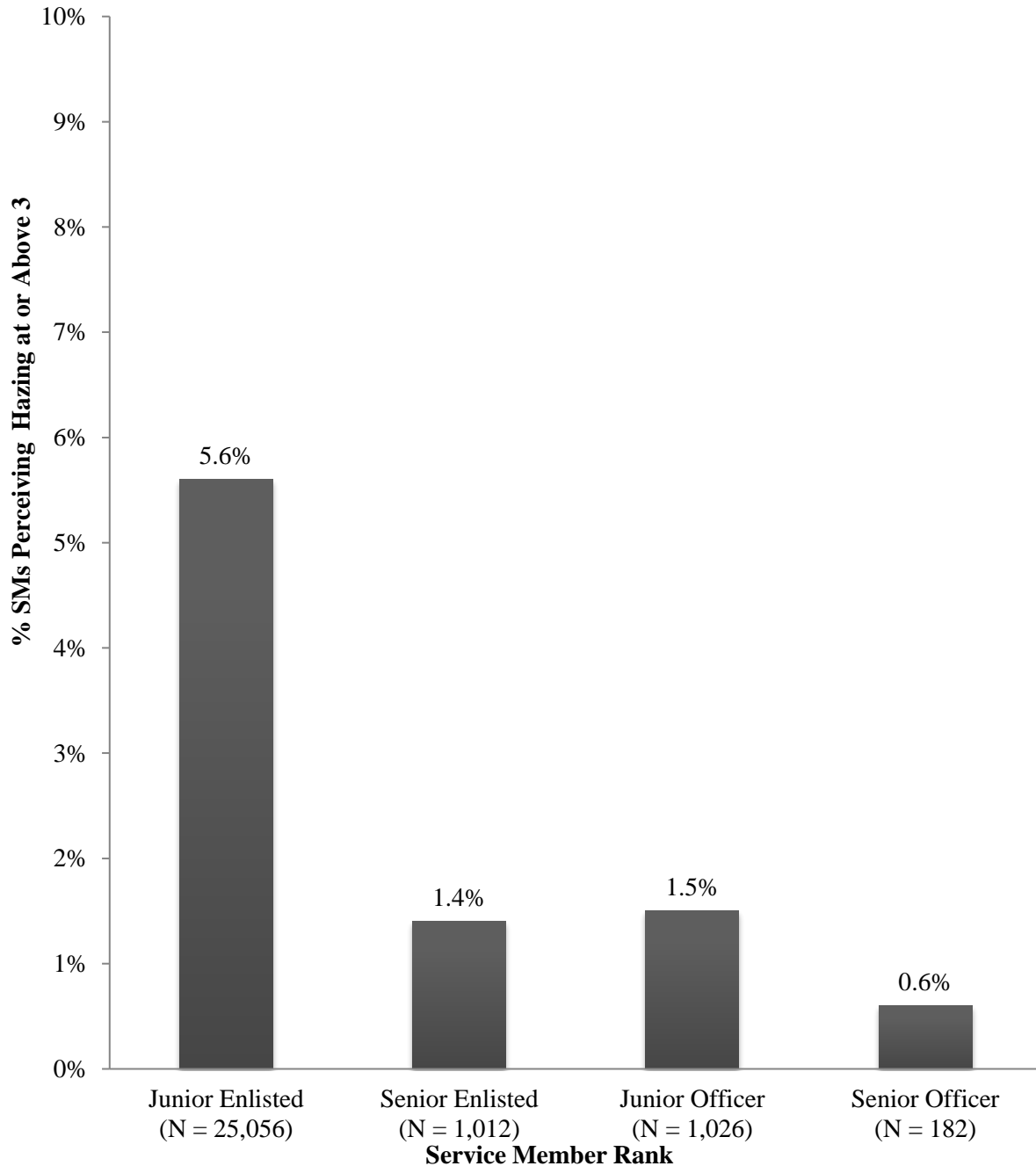
**Figure 2. Overall Perceptions of Hazing by Race**



*Question: What are differences in hazing perceptions among ranks?*

In Figure 3, Junior Enlisted is defined as ranks E1-E6, Senior Enlisted as E-7 and above, Junior Officer as O1-O3, and Senior Officer as O-4 and above. A consistent theme found throughout these rank data is that junior ranking SMs are substantially more likely to perceive hazing in their units than any other rank group and senior officers report little to no perceptions of hazing (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Overall Perceptions of Hazing by Rank**

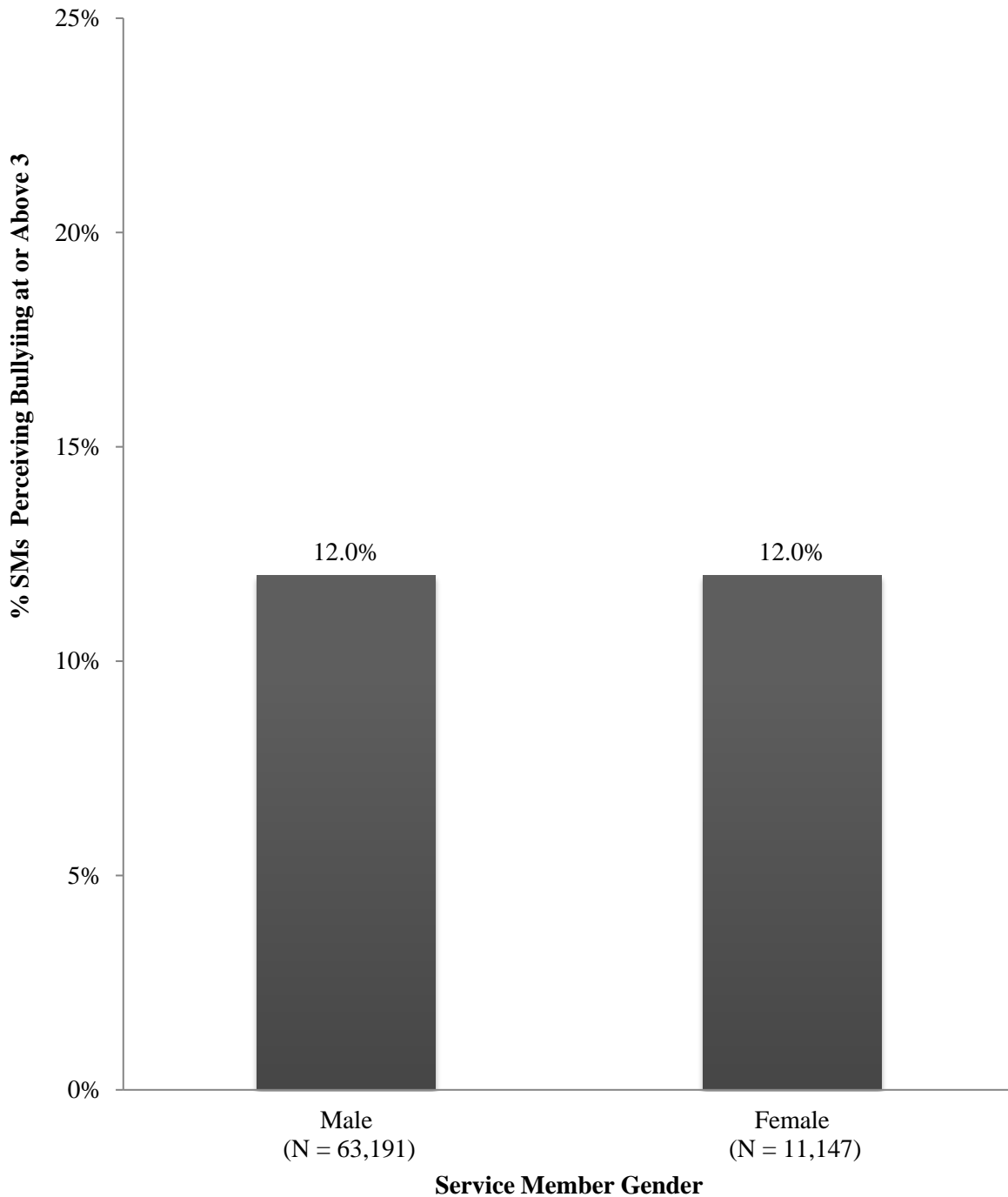




*Question: What are differences in bullying perceptions among male and female SMs?*

Overall, men and women experience similar perceptions of bullying (see Figure 4); however, differences become more pronounced when broken down by rank (see Figure 16) and deployment (see Figure 18).

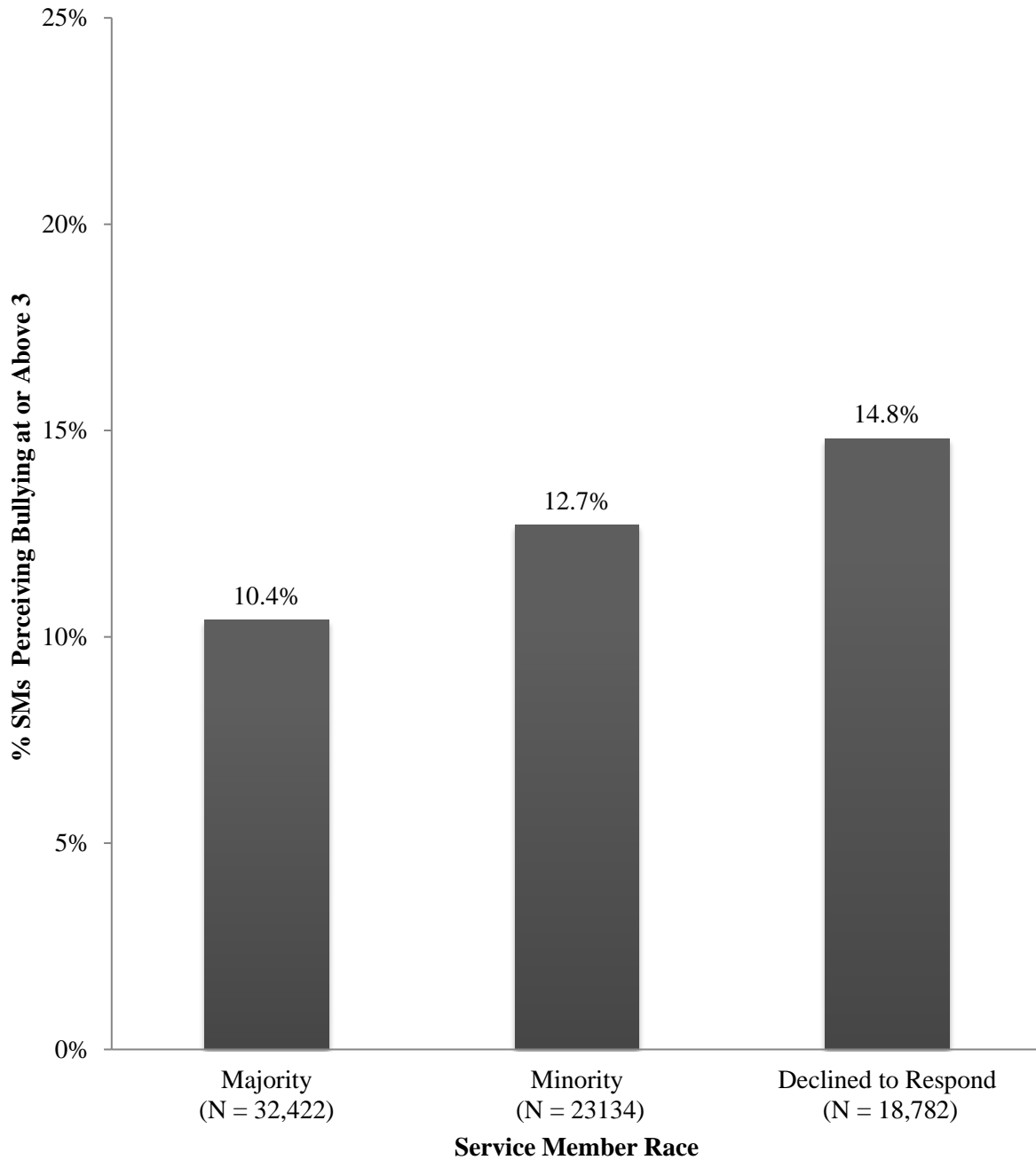
**Figure 4. Overall Perceptions of Bullying by Gender**



*Question: What are differences in bullying perceptions among racial groups?*

Similar to perceptions of hazing, perceptions of bullying tend to be greater among minority SMs (see Figure 5). These perceptions are greatest among those who declined to report their race.

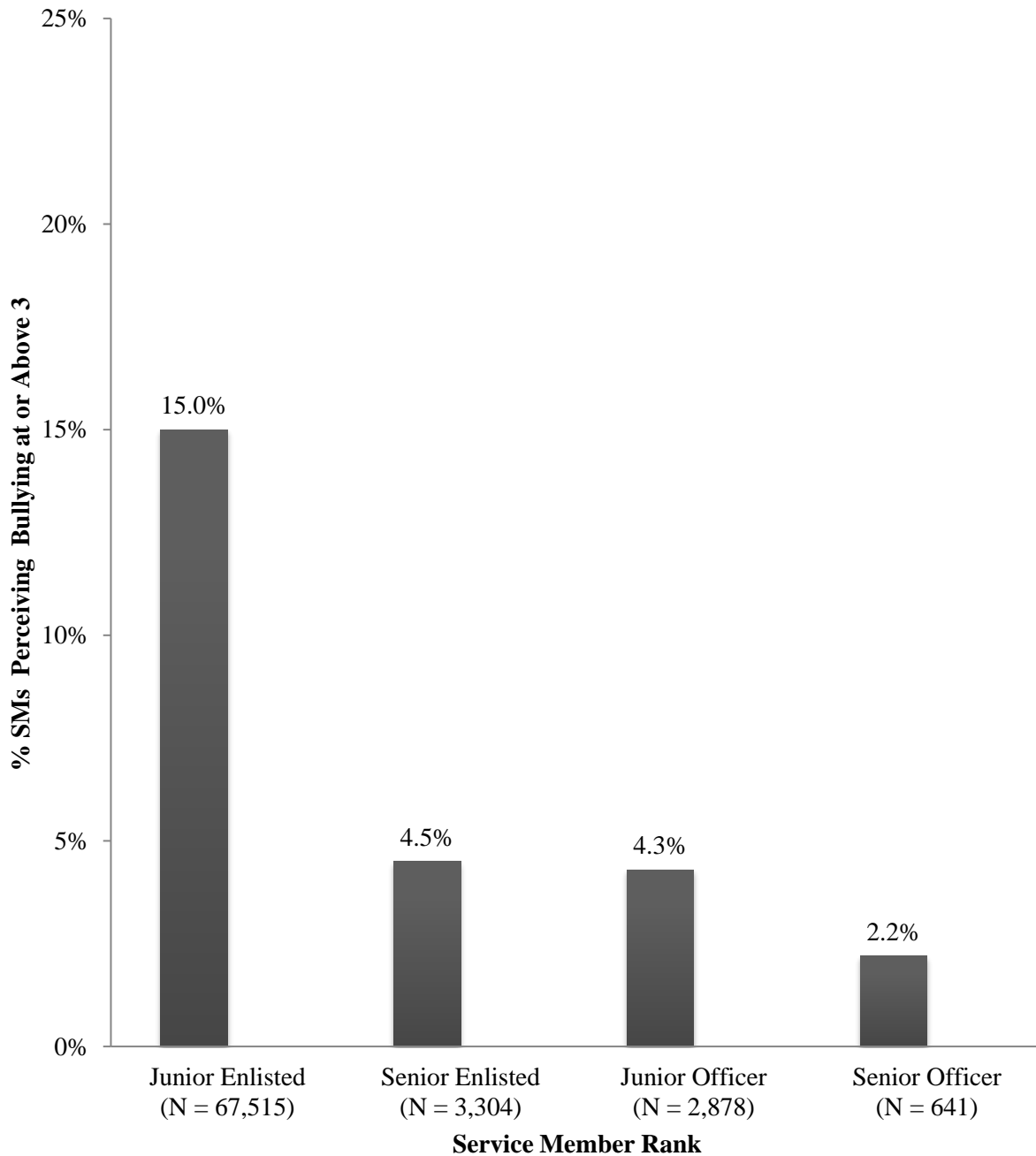
**Figure 5. Overall Perceptions of Bullying by Race**



*Question: What are differences in hazing perception among ranks?*

In Figure 6 below, Junior Enlisted is defined as SMs rank E1-E6, Senior Enlisted as SMs rank E-7 and above, Junior Officer in defined as O1-O3, and Senior Officer is defined as O-4 and above. A consistent theme found throughout these rank data is that junior enlisted SMs are substantially more likely to perceive bullying in their units than any other rank group. Senior officers appear to be substantially less likely to report bullying perceptions in than units than other ranks.

**Figure 6. Overall Perceptions of Bullying by Rank**



## **A Summary of Perceptions of Hazing**

From these data thus far, perceptions of hazing are relatively small overall across the U.S. Armed Services. Of the 629,472 Active Duty SMs in this study, 27,378 (4.4%) reported that, on average, they agreed (3 out of 4 on the hazing scale) or strongly agreed (4 out of 4 on the hazing scale) that hazing behaviors take place in their unit. However, when broken down into groups (i.e., gender, race, deployment status) that number can more than double to over 9% of SMs (e.g., Declined to Respond their Race and deployed CONUS, see Figure 9).

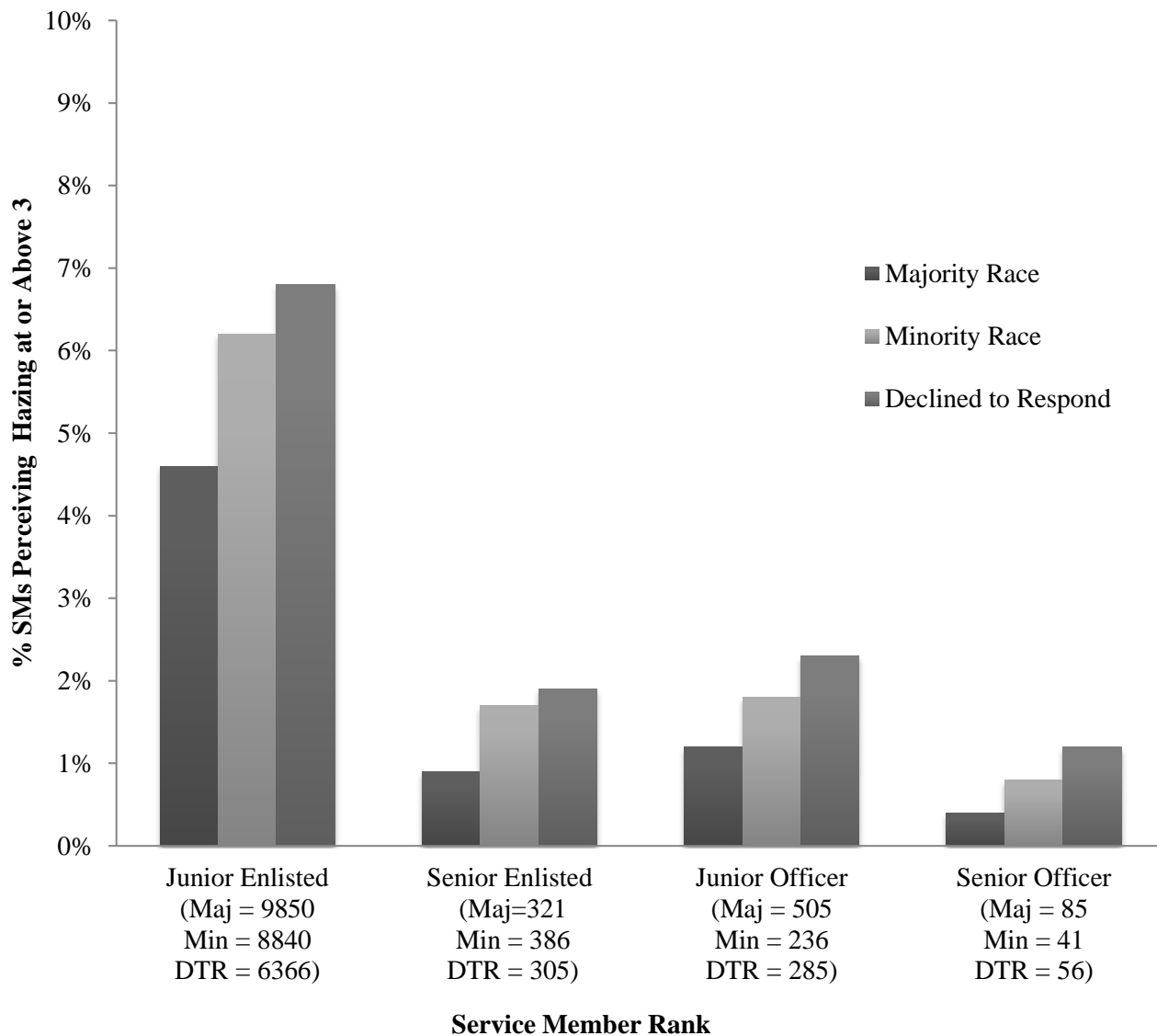
The following six figures provide a breakdown of hazing perceptions among SMs using combinations of two demographic criteria from rank, race, gender, and deployment status. These graphs illustrate both the similarity, and at times, large differences in perceptions of hazing among these groups.

*Question: What are differences in hazing perceptions when broken down by rank and race?*

Junior Enlisted SMs report substantially higher perceptions of hazing than do any other rank groups (see Table 1, p. 35). Within the majority race group, junior enlisted SMs (4.5%) are up to 10 times more likely than senior officers (0.4%) to perceive hazing in their units (see Table 1). On the low end, junior enlisted SMs (6.7%) are still 3 times more likely than junior officers (2.2%) to perceive hazing when both groups chose not to report their race (see Table 1).

Additionally, a consistent trend is evident regarding race. Majority race SMs reported lower perceptions of hazing than did minority race SMs at all ranks. This difference is most pronounced at the junior enlisted level where 4.5% of majority race SMs perceived hazing in their units whereas 6.2% of the minority race SMs perceived hazing in their units (see Table 1). These differences are further evident when SMs declined to report their race (see Figure 7).

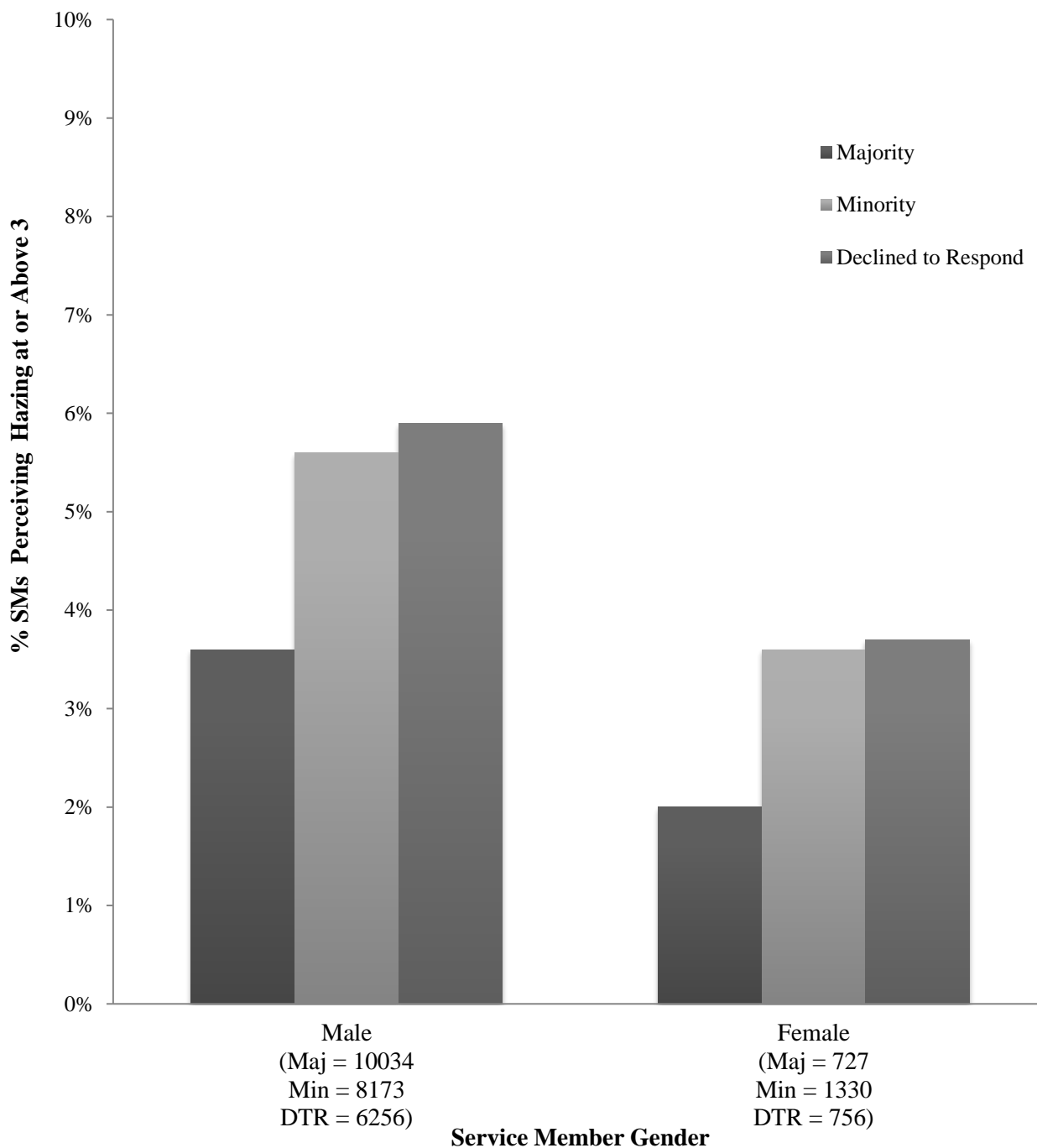
**Figure 7. Perceptions of Hazing by Race and Rank**



*Question: What are differences in hazing perceptions when broken down by gender and race?*

As noted in Figure 1, male SMs reported higher perceptions of hazing than female SMs. This difference is further illustrated below when broken down by race (see Figure 8). Majority race SMs report the lowest perceptions of hazing whereas minority SMs and SMs who declined to indicate their race report similar perceptions of hazing.

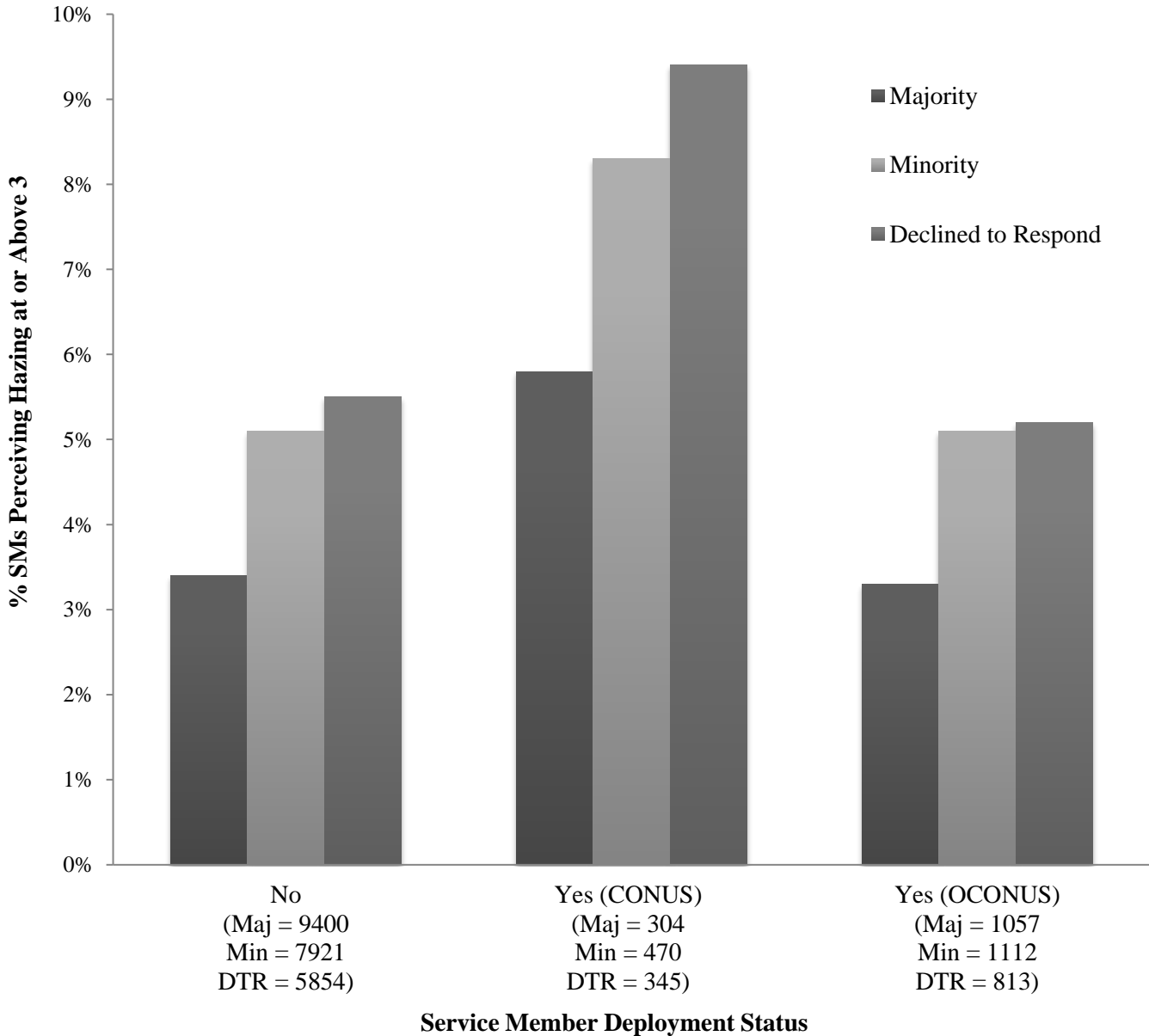
**Figure 8. Perceptions of Hazing by Gender and Race**



*Question: What are differences in hazing perceptions when broken down by deployment status and race?*

SMs tend to report greater perceptions of hazing when stationed CONUS than do those not deployed or deployed OCONUS (see Figure 9). SMs stationed CONUS are nearly twice as likely to report perceptions of hazing in their units as are those deployed abroad or not deployed at all. Continuing the trend demonstrated in Figure 9, minority SMs reported greater perceptions of hazing than did majority SMs, regardless of their deployment status. This difference is also somewhat greater for those who declined to report their race.

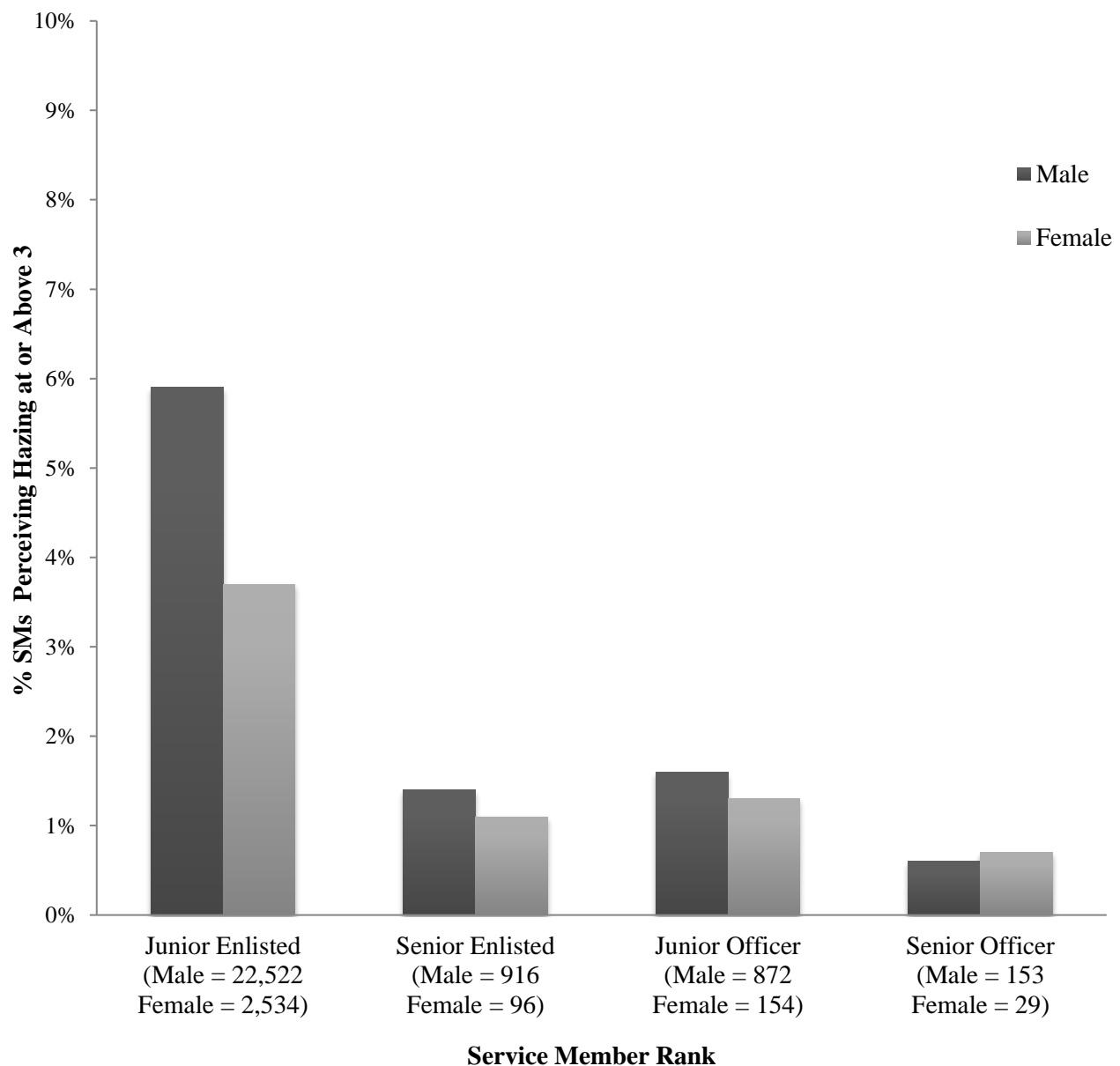
**Figure 9. Perceptions of Hazing by Deployment Status and Race**



*Question: What are differences in hazing perceptions when broken down by rank and gender?*

As previously illustrated, perceptions of hazing are higher overall for male SMs than for female SMs (see Figure 1). In Figure 10 below, it becomes clear that these gender differences stem primarily from junior enlisted SMs. Males are nearly twice as likely to report hazing in their units as are females. Among senior enlisted SMs and officers, these differences shrink substantially, suggesting that male junior enlisted SMs may be a group more likely to perceive hazing (see Figure 10). Worth noting, though, is that female senior officers are slightly more likely to perceive hazing than their male counterparts.

**Figure 10. Perceptions of Hazing by Rank and Gender**

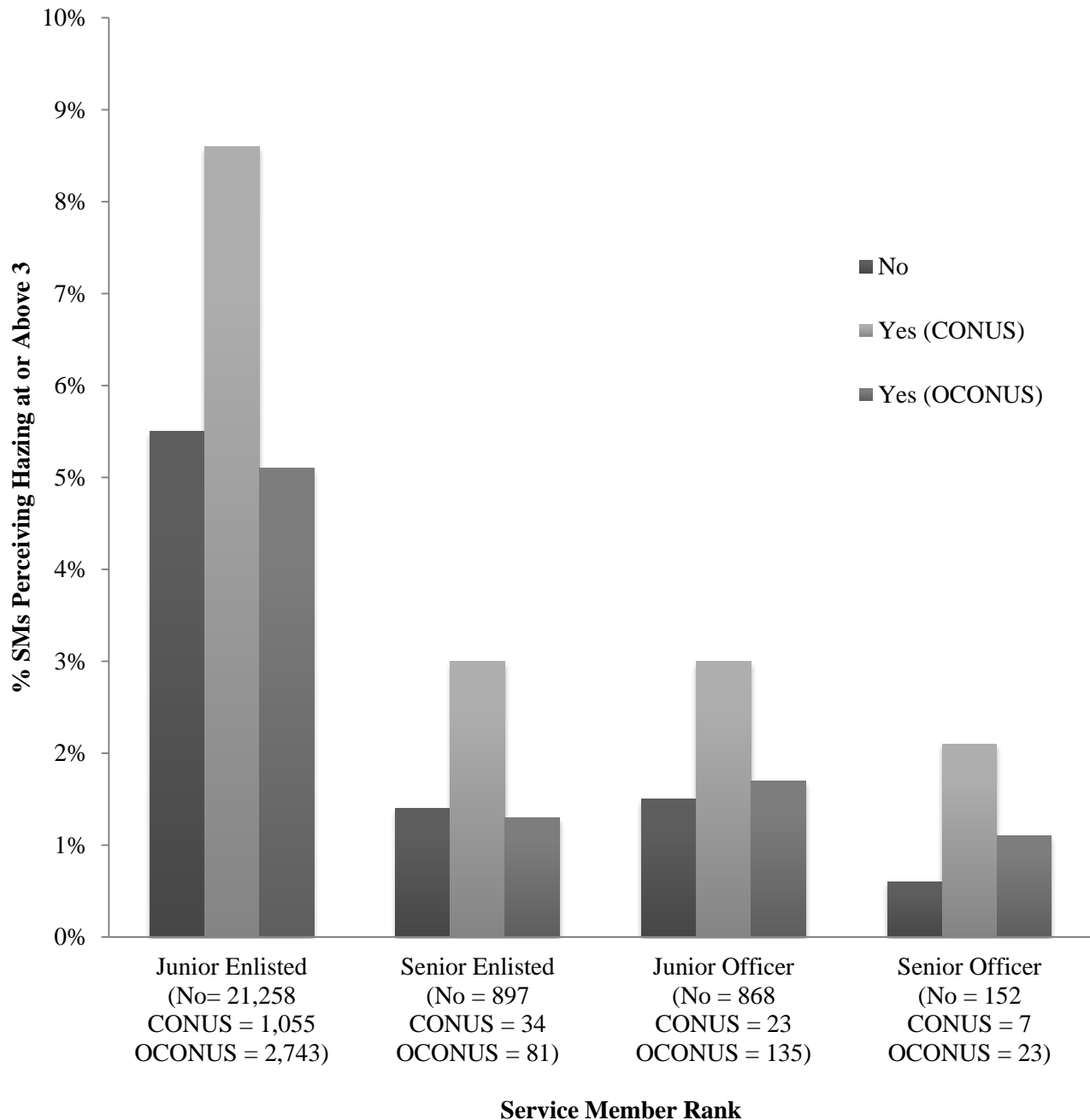




*Question: What are differences in hazing perceptions when broken down by rank and deployment status?*

Figure 11 highlights the higher perceptions of hazing among junior enlisted SMs and those deployed CONUS. Whereas the trend of higher hazing perceptions among Junior Enlisted SMs was demonstrated in Figures 9 and 10, this figure shows that SMs deployed CONUS were also more likely to report perceptions of hazing in their units, often by a wide margin.

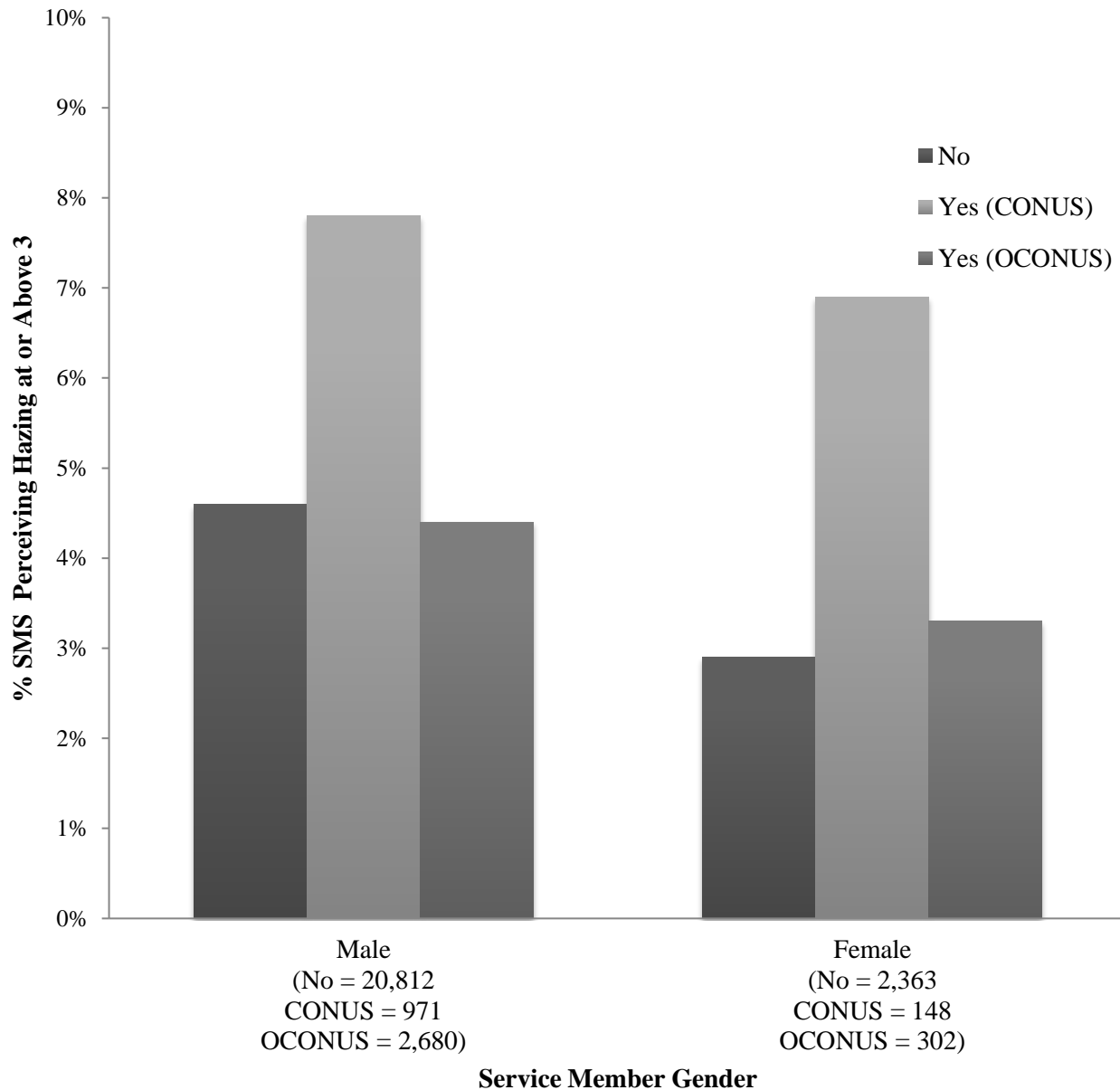
**Figure 11. Perceptions of Hazing by Rank and Deployment Status**



*Question: What are differences in hazing perceptions when broken down by gender and deployment status?*

Figure 12 further illustrates how male SMs report higher perceptions of hazing in their units than female SMs. Perceptions of hazing appear to be higher for both men and women deployed CONUS than for men or women not deployed or deployed OCONUS. Further, women deployed OCONUS are somewhat more likely to perceive hazing in their units than those not deployed.

**Figure 12. Perceptions of Hazing by Gender and Deployment Status**



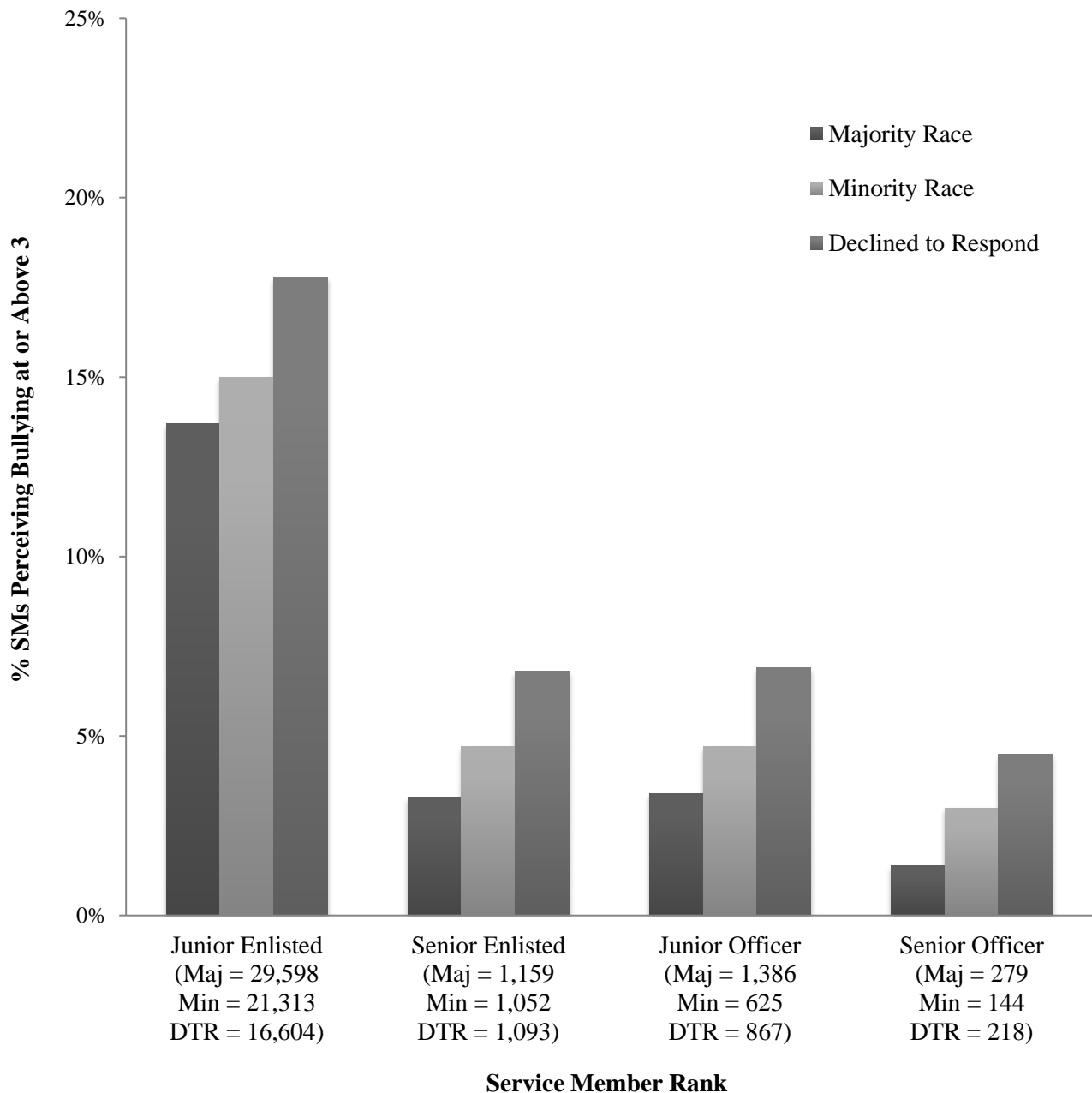
## **A Summary of Perceptions of Bullying**

Perceptions of bullying, or “demeaning behaviors” as these behaviors are referred to in the DEOCS, are far more pronounced in these data than are perceptions of hazing. Of the 629,472 responses on the DEOCS, the number of SMs reporting that they perceived bullying was taking place in their units ( $\geq 3$  on a 4 point scale) was 74,817 (11.9%). This is nearly three times the number reporting they perceived hazing in their units (27,372; see Table 1). When broken down further, it is apparent that junior enlisted SMs are more likely to report perceptions of bullying (see Figure 13), as are racial minorities (see Figure 14), and persons deployed CONUS (see Figure 15).

*Question: What are differences in bullying perceptions when broken down by rank and race?*

Minority and non-race disclosing junior enlisted SMs reported higher perceptions of bullying among all groups compared to majority race SMs. Majority race junior enlisted SMs perceived bullying at a rate of ten times that of majority race senior officers (1.4% vs. 13.6%, respectively). Similarly, minority race junior enlisted SMs perceived bullying at rate of five times that of minority race senior officers (2.9% vs. 14.9%). Similar to the hazing findings above, SMs not reporting their race were more likely to perceive bullying in their units at all ranks (see Figures 12 and 13).

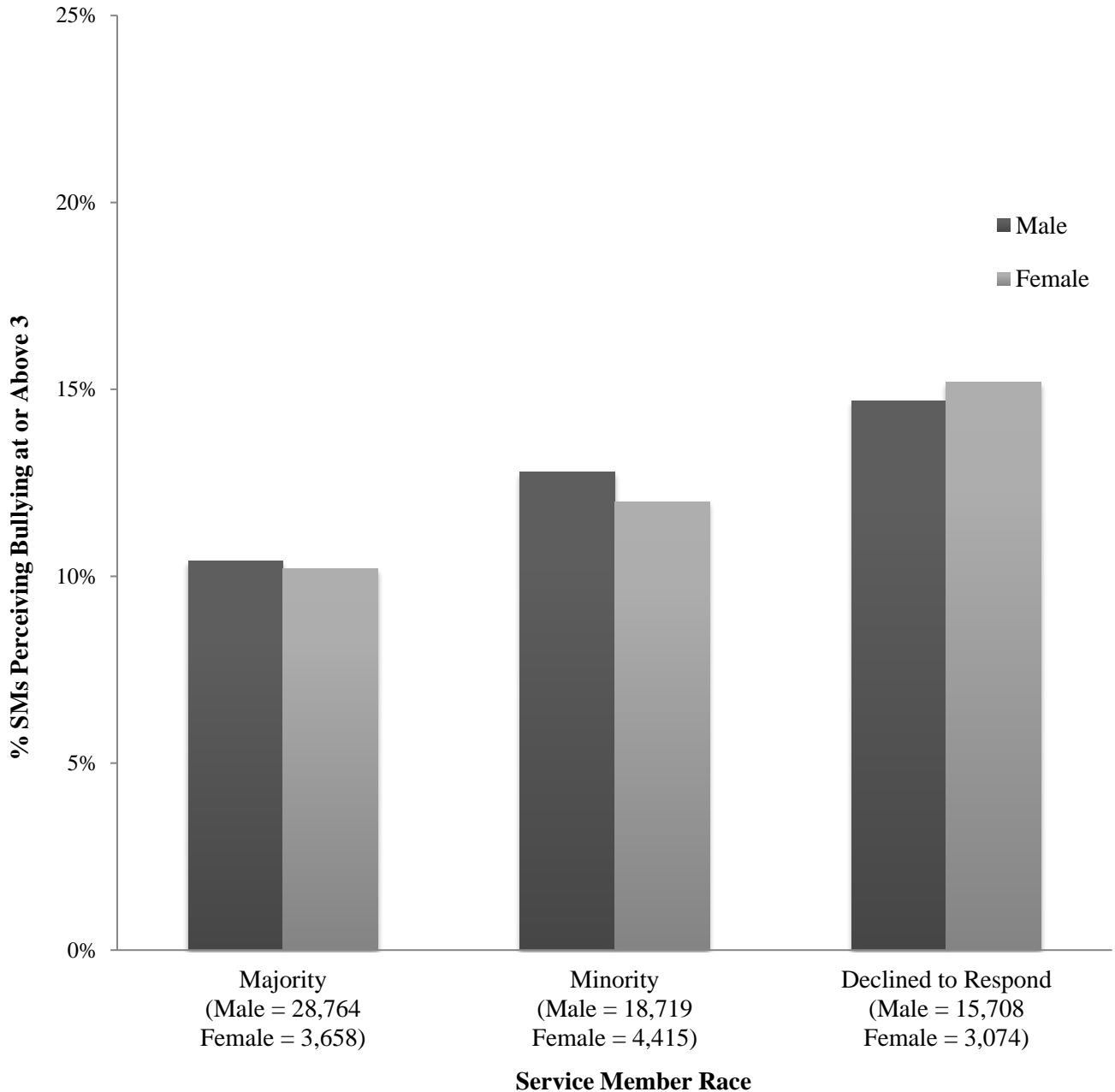
**Figure 13. Perceptions of Bullying by Rank and Race**



*Question: What are differences in bullying perceptions when broken down by race and gender?*

There are few differences between male and female SMs regarding perceptions of bullying across racial groups. Similar with hazing, racial minorities and those who chose not to indicate their race reported higher perceptions of bullying in their units than racial majority SMs (see Figure 14).

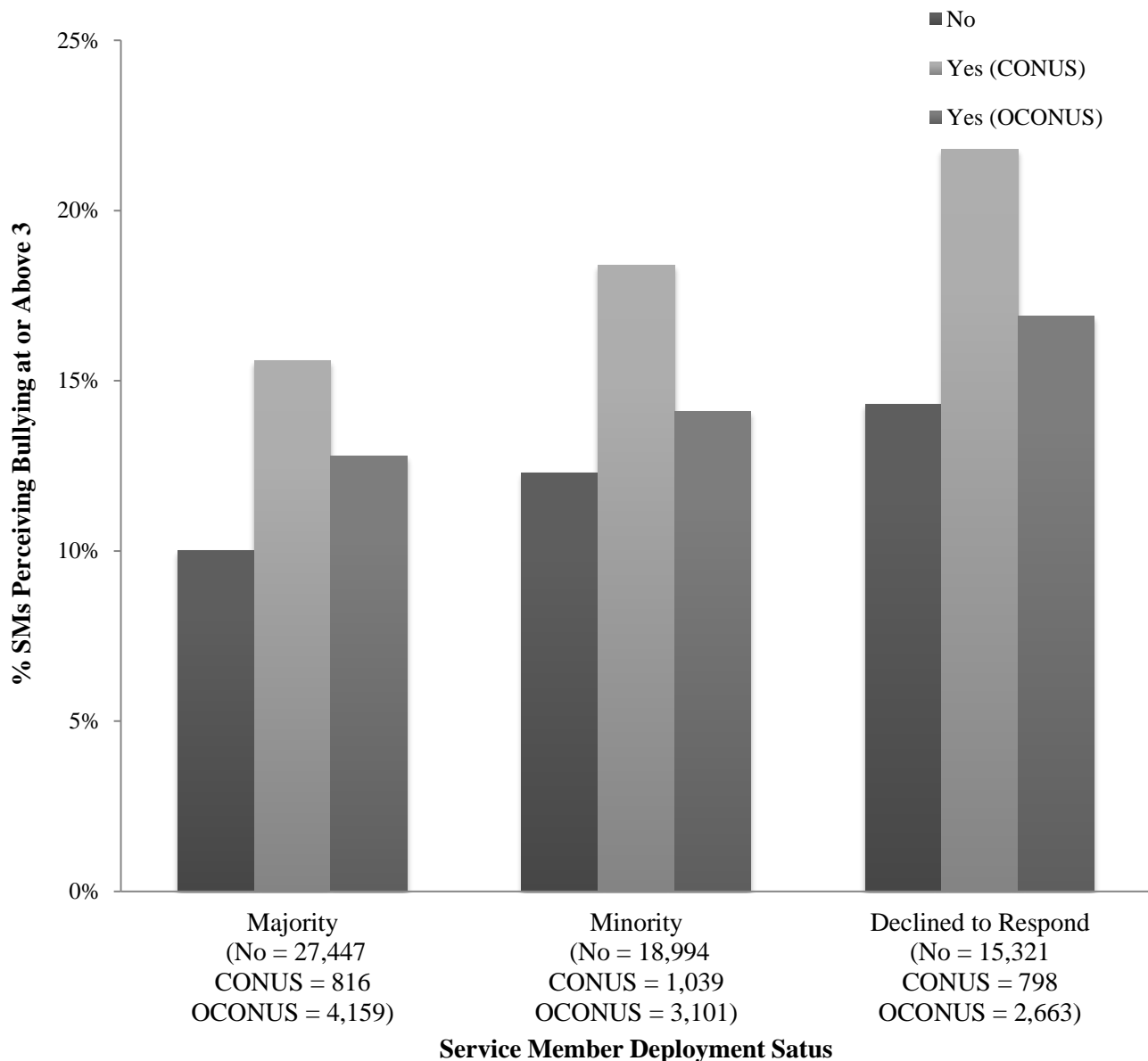
**Figure 14. Perceptions of Bullying by Race and Gender**



*Question: What are differences in bullying perceptions when broken down by race and deployment status?*

SMs deployed CONUS reported the highest perceptions of bullying in their units (see Figure 15). SMs deployed CONUS who declined to provide their race (21.3%) perceived bullying in their units more than any other group. Racial minority SMs deployed CONUS (18.3%) reported the third highest perceptions of bullying after junior enlisted SMs deployed CONUS (19.8%). Race has a clear impact on perceived bullying; however, being deployed CONUS appears to overshadow this influence. When not deployed, all racial groups reported lower perceptions of bullying in their units than nearly all deployed groups.

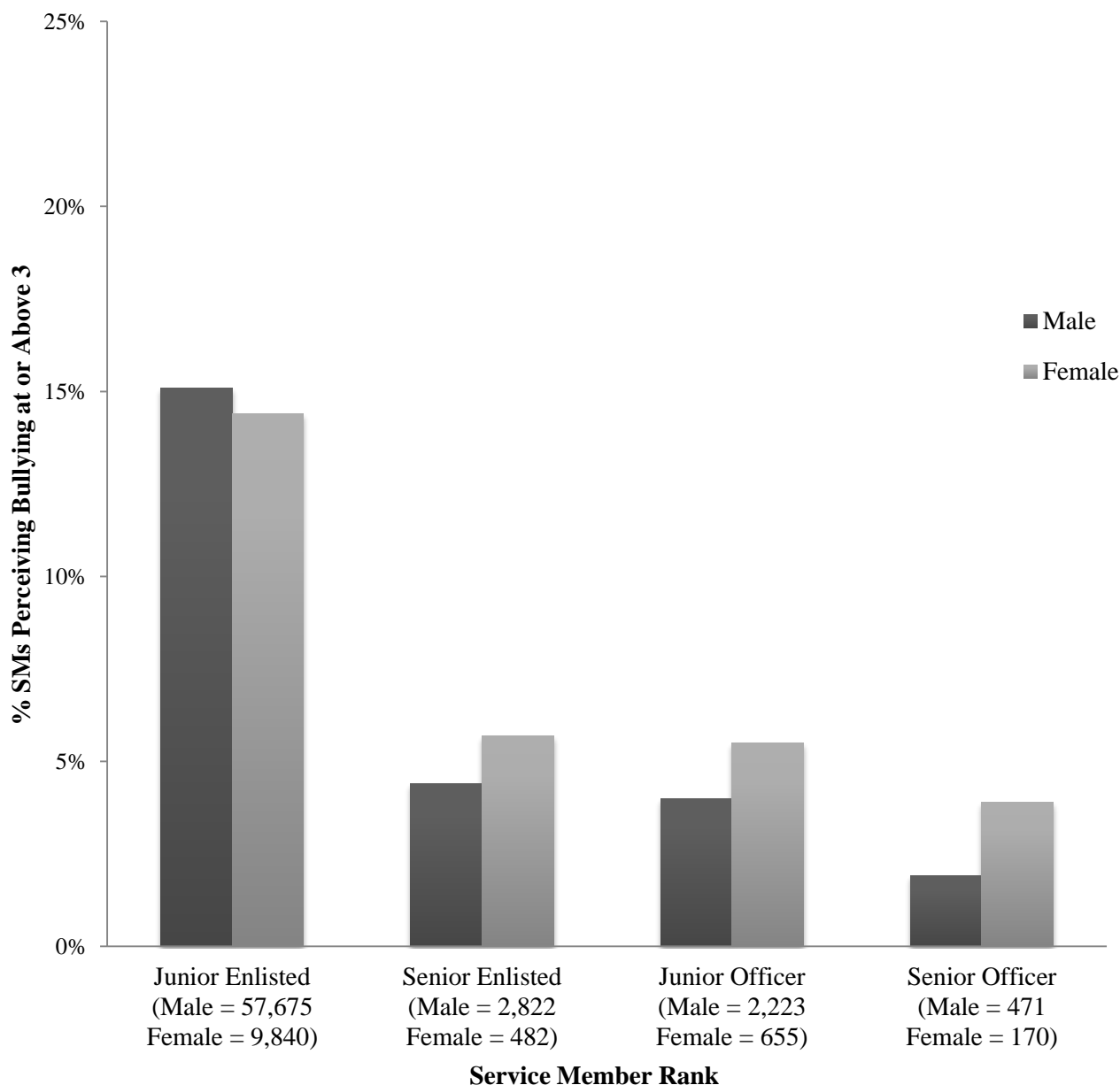
**Figure 15. Perceptions of Bullying by Race and Deployment Status**



*Question: What are differences in bullying perceptions when broken down by rank and gender?*

Similar to the hazing findings (see Figure 11), substantially more junior enlisted SMs perceived bullying within their units than did other rank groups. Unlike with the hazing findings, male SMs reported only slightly more bullying at the junior enlisted level whereas women reported greater perceptions of bullying taking place at all other levels. This finding is especially true for senior officers. Twice as many female SMs (proportionally) at the senior officer level perceived bullying in their units as compared to their male counterparts (see Figure 16).

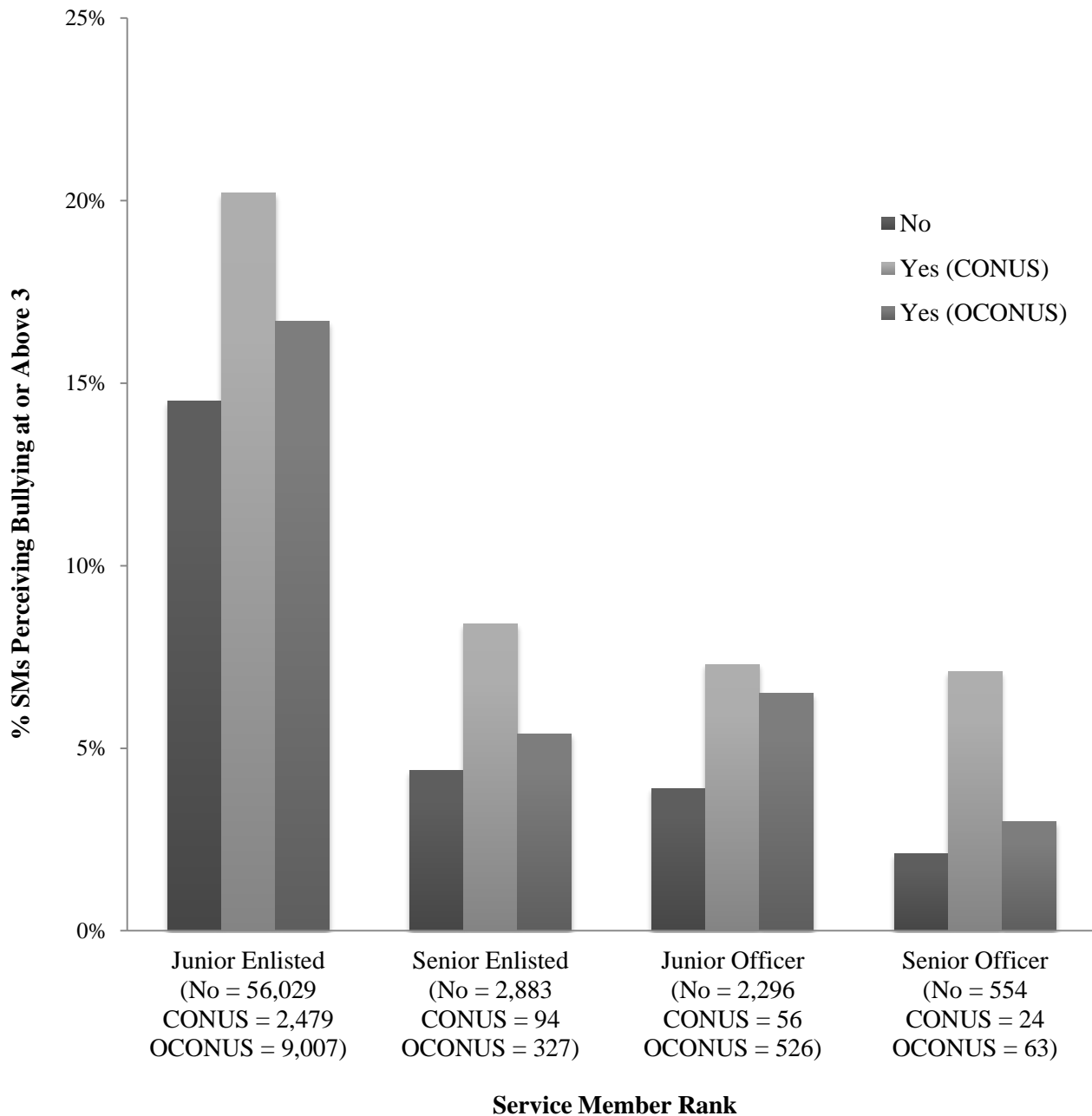
**Figure 16. Perceptions of Bullying by Rank and Gender**



*Question: What are differences in bullying perceptions when broken down by rank and deployment status?*

Perceptions of bullying are greater among junior enlisted SMs than any other rank group by a large margin (see Figure 17). Junior enlisted SMs deployed CONUS report bullying at double or triple the rate of senior enlisted SMs and officers. Non-deployed senior officers reported the lowest perceptions of bullying than other groups; however, they reported comparable perceptions to junior officers and senior enlisted SMs when deployed CONUS.

**Figure 17. Perceptions of Bullying by Rank and Deployment Status**

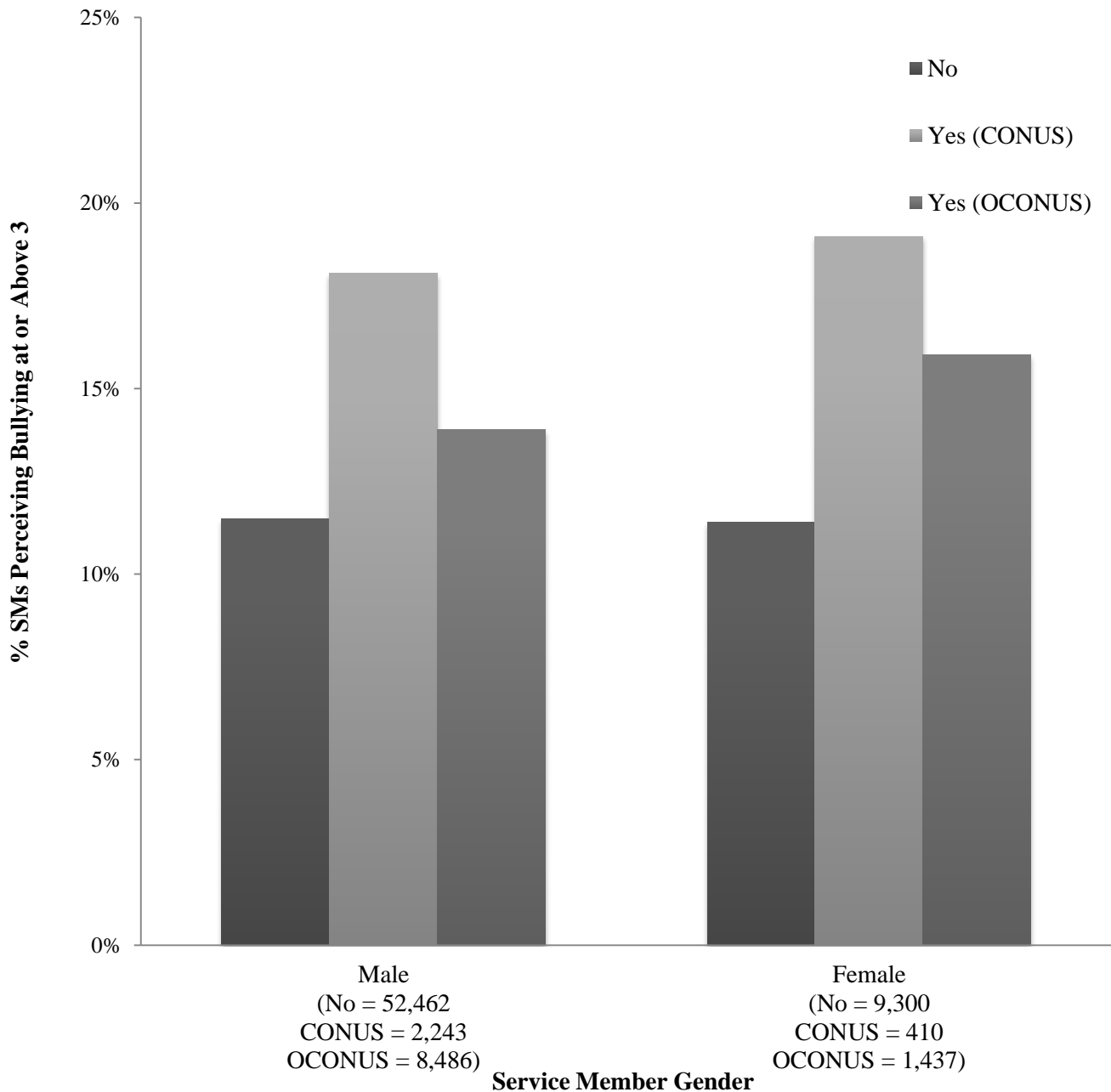


*Question: What are differences in bullying perceptions when broken down by gender and deployment status?*



Female SMs stationed CONUS and OCONUS tended to be more likely to perceive bullying in their units than their male counterparts. This difference is more pronounced among those deployed OCONUS, where 2% more female SMs perceived bullying in their units than did male SMs. Among those not deployed, there is little difference between genders.

**Figure 18. Perceptions of Bullying by Gender and Deployment Status**



## Overall Summary

The purpose of this report was to analyze the frequency of SMs' perceptions of hazing and bullying within their units as indicated by an average response of  $\geq 3$  (3 = "agree" or 4 = "strongly agree"). The results provide an unclear picture when not broken down by rank, race, gender, and deployment status. The average level of perceptions of hazing and bullying is relatively low among SMs, yet there are clear demographic group differences. Overall summaries of hazing and bullying perceptions are provided and findings are broken down by subgroups.

Junior and Senior Officers and Senior Enlisted SMs reported far lower perceptions of hazing and bullying than their junior enlisted counterparts. Whereas there are clear differences with regard to race (see Figures 7, 9, 13, and 15), these differences appear small when comparing junior enlisted SMs to the other ranks. Racial majority SMs tend to perceive less hazing and bullying than minority SMs and those SMs who declined to report their race. The similarity between racial minority SMs and SMs not reporting their race is possible indicator that those SMs choosing not to report their race are primarily also racial minorities, though there is no way to confirm this. SMs fearful of identification may be more likely to not report identifying characteristics, and thus, minority race SMs fear they are potentially more identifiable. Among all groups, majority race senior officers are least likely to perceive hazing (see Figure 7) or bullying (see Figure 13) in their units. Lastly, non-deployed SMs perceive lower levels of hazing and bullying; however, these differences are sometimes overshadowed by the influence of rank (see Figures 9 and 15).

Overall, findings indicate that men, junior enlisted minorities, and SMs deployed CONUS are most likely to perceive hazing. Findings indicate men tend to perceive hazing at a

higher proportion than women (see Figure 1), which may be an indicator that men are also more likely to experience hazing. Perceptions of hazing were revealed to be far more prominent among junior enlisted SMs (see Figures 5, 8, 9, and Table 2 on p. 37) as well as racial minorities (see Figures 7, 9, 10, and Table 2), and persons deployed CONUS (see Figures 7, 9, 10, and Table 2). The group most likely to report hazing was deployed CONUS SMs who also declined to report their race (see Figure 7), which is in line with higher rates of hazing perceptions reported by those not revealing their race in all categories.

Further, findings indicate SMs perceive bullying and/or demeaning behaviors are more prominent than hazing. Groups reporting the highest perceptions of bullying in their units include junior enlisted SMs, racial minorities/those declining to report their race, and SMs deployed CONUS. Whereas men and women report similar perceptions of bullying overall, differences appear across rank and deployment status. The four groups reporting the highest levels of bullying are all deployed CONUS (see Figures 13, 15, and 16), indicating a potential need to investigate the manner in which CONUS deployments impact bullying and demeaning behaviors experienced by SMs. Whereas the group most likely to report bullying did not provide their race, making recommendations difficult, the second most likely group to perceive bullying in their units were junior enlisted SMs stationed CONUS. Junior enlisted SMs are two to four times more likely to perceive bullying than are other ranks, regardless of race (see Figure 11) or gender (see Figure 15).

When examining these findings with regard to demographic-subgroups, there are less strong differences between male and female SMs than are found among other groups (though these differences do exist). Female SMs tended to perceive hazing in their units less frequently than males but had comparable levels of bullying. Race made no clear difference in perceptions

of hazing between genders. Deployment status had similar levels proportionally, with slightly more women perceiving hazing OCONUS than not deployed. Female SMs were also more likely to perceive bullying outside of the junior enlisted ranks. This difference was most pronounced at the senior officer level where women were twice as likely to perceive bullying as male SMs (see Figure 14; 1.9% vs. 3.9%, respectively). Males perceived higher levels of hazing at all ranks but the senior officer level whereas women were slightly more likely to perceive hazing in their units.

Results show that there is a clear disconnect between junior enlisted SMs' perceptions of hazing and bullying in their units and that of senior enlisted and officer ranks. Junior enlisted SMs (6.7%) perceive hazing in their units at a rate of up to fifteen times that of Senior Officers (0.4%, see Figure 5). Similarly, junior enlisted SMs perceive bullying (17.8%) in their units at a rate of up to twelve times that of senior officers (1.4%, see Figure 13). Junior enlisted SMs may perceive hazing and bullying at higher rates due to their own experiences, incidents they have witnessed or heard about, or different interpretations of the statements provided. Whereas measures from this study cannot be used as reliable indicators of hazing and bullying prevalence, differences in perception between ranks should be recognized and addressed.

When accounting for differences in rank, race, gender, and SMs deployed CONUS consistently perceived higher levels of hazing and bullying than SMs not deployed or deployed OCONUS. In one instance, those SMs deployed OCONUS and not reporting their race reported higher perceptions of bullying (16.9%) than did majority race SMs stationed CONUS (15.1%, see Figure 13). However, at no time did a SM group not deployed or deployed CONUS with the same race, gender, or rank perceive greater hazing or bullying than those deployed CONUS.

These findings, taken together, illustrate that rank, race, gender, and deployment status all play an important role in perceptions of bullying and hazing. In particular, the results show that junior enlisted SMs' perceptions of bullying and hazing in units is more common than are other rank groups' perceptions. This may be attributable to a potential lack of awareness or exposure by other rank groups, particularly senior officers. As a consequence, this may hinder progress in combating hazing and bullying. It is commanders who set policy for their units and often senior enlisted and junior officers who enforce such policy. Failing to recognize bullying and hazing within a unit may impact policy and enforcement, promoting a culture that neither acknowledges such behaviors take place nor takes steps to address them. Ways to instill greater awareness of bullying and hazing perceptions among junior enlisted SMs must be implemented for both policy and enforcement to best meet the needs of SMs.

### **Limitations of the Current Study**

There are several limitations of this study. First, the DEOCS (at the time of this writing) is not intended to serve as a tool that measures prevalence of hazing or bullying. The statements employed on the current DEOCS are not used to inquire about personal experiences/prevalence with bullying and hazing (e.g., "Have you experienced hazing?"). Whereas it should be noted locally developed items requesting information on prevalence can be requested by commanders for their unit's DEOCS, these items are not used consistently among all commands and were not incorporated into the report. Instead, the DEOCS asks about perceptions of bullying and hazing occurring within the units as a whole (e.g., "Newcomers are harassed or humiliated..."). Therefore, we cannot state these findings represent reports by victims personally experiencing hazing or bullying. However, there is also no obvious reason to assume certain groups (i.e., men,

junior enlisted, and minority race SMs) are simply more adept at recognizing hazing and bullying in their units than others. It may be more reasonable to argue that these differences are due to exposure to bullying and hazing behaviors through personal experiences, observations, or word-of-mouth from fellow SMs. Also, the statements on the DEOCS measuring these behaviors never use the words “bully” or “haze” and instead refer to specific incidents (e.g., Bullying: “Certain members are purposely excluded from social work group activities”; Hazing: “Newcomers are harassed or humiliated prior to being accepted into the organization”; see Appendix 1). SMs who completed the DEOCS may have perceived these statements as measuring prevalence instead of actual perceptions and responded accordingly; however, without SM response data on items that measure prevalence specifically it is unwise to draw this conclusion.

Second, the DEOCS also does not have the ability to identify individuals due to its anonymous design. Whereas this is an overall positive and necessary component of the tool for the protection of respondents, some units may take the survey multiple times within a year due to commander turnover, mandatory regulatory requirements, or permanent change of station moves. Because of this, there may be multiple responses from the same individuals, influencing reported perception rates. It is not known if these repeated responses would increase, decrease, or have no discernable impact on overall perception rates of bullying and hazing in this study.

Third, additional demographic criteria such as job type, specific location, and sexual orientation are omitted from these data. These and other characteristics may play an important role in identifying and potentially predicting hazing and bullying indicators. In particular, it is unclear where persons are deployed CONUS or OCONUS so there is no way to tell if certain regions or environments influence hazing and bullying perceptions.

Fourth, additional demographic criteria not included in the data may indicate perceptual differences based on age or other characteristics. For example, it can be assumed that rank and age are highly correlated, as higher rank service members often have spent more time in the military. Because we have no age data in this study, it is unclear how or if perceptions of bullying and hazing are impacted by age or generational differences among SMs. Further, these data may reveal other information regarding the role that sexual orientation, religion, gender identity, or other characteristics play regarding perceptions of hazing and bullying within a unit. Future studies may address any concerns regarding the impact of these potential influences.

### **Comparisons to GAO Report on Hazing**

In February of 2016, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) published a report on incidents of hazing across the Department of Defense (DoD) and Coast Guard (GAO-16-226, 2016). The report primarily outlines findings provided from survey data provided by the RAND Corporation; however, a section of the report also uses DEOCS data in its descriptive analysis. The results of the GAO review offer similar conclusions to this report regarding single variable break downs of similar data provided by the DEOCS. For example, the report also found that lower ranking SMs were more likely than others to perceive both bullying and hazing in their units and that males were moderately more likely to perceive hazing in their units than females (GAO, 2016, p. 36). However, many results revealed in the report differed noticeably from the analysis provided here, which may be due to several methodological differences.

First, the GAO report analysis calculated the number of responses in which a SM reports hazing or bullying as an “agree” or “strongly agree” on all three items for each scale, respectively. As noted in the methodology above, this study used the mean of the three bullying

and three hazing items, establishing a cutoff of 3 (the equivalent of “agree”) when calculating the percentage of SMs perceiving bullying or hazing. Second, the GAO report broke down race and rank differently, focusing on a larger number of classifications for each category. Third, the GAO report does not include deployment status. Fourth, the GAO report does not combine any demographic categories to more closely identify problem areas among more targeted populations (e.g., Senior Enlisted SMs deployed CONUS). Fifth, the current report did not break down findings by Service. Sixth, the current report did not include the U.S. Coast Guard in its analysis. Lastly, the current report employed data from 2015 whereas GAO’s data in their report came from 2014 DEOCS data, indicating different sample populations. The differences between this report and the GAO’s report are noteworthy; however, each report provides unique and useful insight into hazing and bullying perceptions in the U.S. Military.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are based on the premise that groups reporting higher perceptions of hazing and bullying in their units are also more likely to have these personal experiences or at least are more vulnerable to such experiences. In addition, see Appendix 2. below for a shortened recommendation summary breakdown. Our primary recommendation is the dissemination of this report and similar studies, such as the GAO report discussed above, that highlight hazing and bullying findings to leaders who may alter policy and practice. In addition to this general recommendation, four demographic-specific recommendations are proposed.

First, and perhaps most importantly, senior officers and junior enlisted SMs need to be aware of the massive disconnect between their perceptions of hazing and bullying relative to one another. Whereas senior enlisted SMs and officers are relatively similar in their perceptions of



hazing and bullying, junior enlisted SMs report perceptions of these behaviors at a much greater percentage than any other rank group. These senior officers may benefit from investigating why this discrepancy exists and why information regarding hazing and bullying does not appear to reach them or why they do not interpret it as hazing or bullying. Additionally, junior enlisted SMs must recognize that their senior officers may be unaware of bullying and hazing and take steps to bring it to the attention of leadership. When leaders are more aware of bullying and hazing in their units, they can more effectively pin point its sources and causes to combat and eliminate it. This finding may be indicative that there is not a climate of safety in some units where junior-ranking SMs can report hazing and bullying without fear of retaliation or reprisal. We recommend that this discrepancy be brought to the attention of senior leaders through distribution of this and similar studies in order to illuminate the issue and find solutions. These findings indicate senior officers in particular are largely unaware of hazing and bullying behaviors in their own units that are clearly more apparent to junior enlisted SMs.

Second, gender differences in perceptions of hazing may reveal evidence that female SMs are receiving different treatment and inclusion in units' activities, even if some of these activities are not in line with proper military conduct. Male SMs appear more at risk for hazing than are females, due to their higher perceptions of hazing when compared to females. Bullying perceptions among all non-junior enlisted SMs also may warrant attention for female SMs whereas bullying at the junior enlisted SM level is of similar concern for men and women. Gender differences in hazing and bullying warrant further investigation to minimize gender-based discrimination and promote equality among SMs.

Third, race appears to play a meaningful role regarding perceptions of bullying and hazing. Minority race SMs are more likely to perceive bullying and hazing in their units than

majority race SMs. Those SMs not reporting their race are even more likely to perceive bullying and hazing in their units. Further investigation is needed to determine why there appears to be more bullying and hazing perceptions among racial minorities and if these perceptions are due to personal experience or differing perceptions. More research into who are the perpetrators of the perceived discrimination and what are their motivations for what appear to be race-based discriminatory bullying and hazing behaviors is also needed. Additionally, a better understanding of why those SMs not reporting their race have the highest levels of hazing and bullying perceptions is needed. There is a need to understand what group these SMs belong to and if that group is especially fearful of retaliation for their responses on the DEOCS or other types of surveys. If this is the case, then action may be needed in units where SMs do not feel safe reporting hazing and bullying, or other issues, to leadership. More education may also help SMs understand the anonymity component of the DEOCS and why and how all SMs identities are protected information unknown to both researchers and commanders.

Fourth, reported perceptions of bullying and hazing are higher among SMs deployed CONUS. Leadership may more effectively combat bullying and hazing by understanding why perceptions are higher in these environments and focusing efforts that are effective in influencing those behaviors and attitudes of SMs stationed CONUS. Further research may investigate how deployment status has an impact on bullying and hazing by more closely examining differences in SMs' experiences, attitudes, and behaviors. Further, more focused reviews may identify specific OCONUS units reporting higher levels of hazing and bullying in order to focus efforts on areas with the greatest need.

DEOMI is well positioned to address these and other needs indicated above when provided with funding for personnel and technology resources. The DEOCS' significant and

unique access to SMs across the Field, Fleet, and Wing provides a window that can reveal not only demographic differences in bullying and hazing but also indicate issues regarding personal experiences and perceptions in future surveys. Elected Officials supporting efforts to curb hazing and bullying may also provide both public and monetary provisions to help meet these recommendations. For instance, Congresswoman Chu (D-Calif) has shown a personal and professional interest in safeguarding SMs from hazing, in particular. Representative Chu testified recently (May, 2016) to the House Armed Services Committee that the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) must more fully address hazing among SMs. Referencing the five year anniversary of her nephew Harry Lew's death by suicide after extreme "corrective training" (hazing), Representative Chu argued for "...annual reporting, better training, stricter guidance, and department-wide evaluations to put an end to the problem" (Chu.house.gov, Mar, 2016). Similarly, Senator Kristen Gellibrand (D-N.Y.) has worked with others to push for the Military Justice Improvement Act as part of the NDAA (Gilibrand.senate.gov, Dec, 2014). After two hazing cases involving New York SMs, she introduced legislation to "...track, respond to and hold accountable hazing incidents in the military, calls for a comprehensive review of the military's policy on hazing prevention and response and pushes for anonymous reporting procedures" (Gilibrand.senate.gov, Dec, 2012). Lastly, the groups working to combat hazing and bullying may benefit from working together in the effort. The DoD Hazing and Bullying Prevention and Response Working Group may help to unify both research efforts to study bullying and hazing and policy and enforcement efforts such as those by Congresswoman Chu and Senator Gillibrand.

## **Conclusions**

When investigating bullying and hazing perceptions within the U.S. Military, clear patterns emerge. These patterns reveal that certain groups are more likely to perceive hazing and bullying in their units than others. This report highlights those differences, indicating that bullying and hazing interventions may be most impactful when focused on meeting the needs of junior enlisted SMs, racial minorities, and persons deployed CONUS, with gender taking a less straight forward role. The intention of this report is to provide an initial direction toward identifying hazing and bullying as well as justification for targeted intervention strategies and even increased training to combat these unproductive behaviors within the U.S. Military. Collaborations with other ongoing efforts, such as the DoD's Hazing and Bullying Prevention and Response Working Group, may improve the effectiveness of implementing the recommendations made here as well as provide additional information and avenues to curb hazing, bullying, and their impact on overall mission readiness.

Table 1. Demographic Population Frequencies

		Rank				Gender		Race		Deployment Status			
		Junior Enlisted	Senior Enlisted	Junior Officer	Senior Officer	Male	Female	Majority	Minority	DTR	Not D.	CONUS	OCONUS
Rank	Junior Enlisted	457,374	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Senior Enlisted	X	74,011	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Junior Officer	X	X	68,329	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Senior Officer	X	X	X	29,758	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Gender	Male	388,272	65,415	56,258	25,258	535,303	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Female	69,102	8,596	12,071	4,440	X	94,169	X	X	X	X	X	X
Race	Majority	219,146	35,366	42,097	19,901	279,915	36,595	316,510	X	X	X	X	X
	Minority	143,438	22,312	13,406	4,924	147,042	37,038	X	184,080	X	X	X	X
Deployment Status	Declined to Respond (DTR)	94,790	16,333	12,826	4,933	108,346	20,536	X	X	128,882	X	X	X
	Not Deployed Yes (CONUS)	390,431	66,691	59,353	27,259	460,912	82,822	278,244	156,299	109,191	543,734	X	X
	Yes (CONUS)	12,723	1,172	833	360	12,870	2,218	5,523	5,755	3,810	X	15,088	X
	Yes (OCONUS)	54,220	6,148	8,143	2,139	61,521	9,129	32,743	22,026	15,881	X	X	70,650

Note: All numbers indicate sample populations based on categories defined by the X- and Y-axis (i.e., Junior Enlisted Males N = 388272, Senior Enlisted Females N = 8596); Diagonals provide total population of demographic group (i.e., Junior Enlisted N = 457,374); Top row titles are shortened/abbreviated; CONUS = Continental United States, OCONUS = Outside the Continental United States, DTR = Declined to Respond, Not D. = Not Deployed

*Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Service Members Who Indicated at Least a 3 or Greater in Response to Perceptions of Hazing*

<b>Demographic Category</b>	<b>Junior Enlisted (N = 457,374)</b>	<b>Senior Enlisted (N = 74,011)</b>	<b>Junior Officer (N = 68,329)</b>	<b>Senior Officer (N = 29,758)</b>
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	5.8%	1.4%	1.6%	0.6%
Female	3.7%	1.1%	1.3%	0.7%
<b>Race</b>				
Majority	4.5%	0.9%	1.2%	0.4%
Minority	6.2%	1.7%	1.8%	0.9%
DTR	6.7%	1.9%	2.2%	1.1%
<b>Deployment Status</b>				
Not Deployed	5.5%	1.4%	1.5%	0.6%
CONUS	8.4%	3.0%	2.8%	2.0%
OCONUS	5.1%	1.3%	1.7%	1.1%

*Note: Numbers represent the percentage of Service Members reporting on average that they agree (3 out of 4) to strongly agree (4 out of 4) hazing behaviors occur in their unit. DTR = Declined to Respond, CONUS = Deployed in the Continental United States, OCONUS = Deployed Outside of the Continental United States*

*Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of Service Members Who Indicated at Least a 3 or Greater in Response to Perceptions of Bullying*

<b>Demographic Category</b>	<b>Junior Enlisted (N = 457,374)</b>	<b>Senior Enlisted (N = 74,011)</b>	<b>Junior Officer (N = 68,329)</b>	<b>Senior Officer (N = 29,758)</b>
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	15.0%	4.3%	4.0%	1.9%
Female	14.4%	5.6%	5.5%	3.9%
<b>Race</b>				
Majority	13.6%	3.3%	3.3%	1.4%
Minority	14.9%	4.7%	4.7%	2.9%
DTR	17.7%	6.7%	6.8%	4.5%
<b>Deployment Status</b>				
Not Deployed	14.5%	4.4%	3.9%	2.1%
CONUS	19.8%	8.1%	6.9%	6.7%
OCONUS	16.7%	5.3%	6.5%	0.3%

*Note: Numbers represent the percentage of Service Members reporting on average that they agree (3 out of 4) to strongly agree (4 out of 4) bullying/demeaning behaviors occur in their unit. DTR = Declined to Respond, CONUS = Continental United States, OCONUS = Outside of the Continental United States*

Table 4. Service Member Populations by Demographic Group Perceiving Hazing at  $\geq 3$  (Agree)

		<b>Rank</b>		<b>Gender</b>		<b>Race</b>		<b>Deployment Status</b>					
		<i>Junior Enlisted</i>	<i>Senior Enlisted</i>	<i>Junior Officer</i>	<i>Senior Officer</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Majority</i>	<i>Minority</i>	<i>DTR</i>	<i>Not D.</i>	<i>CONUS</i>	<i>OCONUS</i>
<b>Rank</b>	<i>Junior Enlisted</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	<i>Senior Enlisted</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	<i>Junior Officer</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	<i>Senior Officer</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Gender</b>	<i>Male</i>	5.9%	1.4%	1.6%	0.6%	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	<i>Female</i>	3.7%	1.1%	1.3%	0.7%	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Race</b>	<i>Majority</i>	4.6%	0.9%	1.2%	0.4%	3.6%	2.0%	X	X	X	X	X	X
	<i>Minority</i>	6.2%	1.7%	1.8%	0.8%	5.6%	3.6%	X	X	X	X	X	X
	<i>Declined to Respond (DTR)</i>	6.8%	1.9%	2.3%	1.2%	5.8%	3.7%	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Deployment Status</b>	<i>Not Deployed</i>	5.5%	1.4%	1.5%	0.6%	4.6%	2.9%	3.4%	5.1%	5.5%	X	X	X
	<i>Yes (CONUS)</i>	8.6%	3.0%	3.0%	2.1%	7.8%	6.9%	5.8%	8.3%	9.4%	X	X	X
	<i>Yes (OCONUS)</i>	5.1%	1.3%	1.7%	1.1%	4.4%	3.3%	3.3%	5.1%	5.2%	X	X	X

Note: DTR = Declined to Respond, CONUS = Continental United States, OCONUS = Outside of the Continental United States



Table 5. Service Member Populations by Demographic Group Perceiving Bullying at  $\geq 3$  (Agree)

		Rank				Gender		Race		Deployment Status			
		Junior Enlisted	Senior Enlisted	Junior Officer	Senior Officer	Male	Female	Majority	Minority	DTR	Not D.	CONUS	OCONUS
Rank	Junior Enlisted	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Senior Enlisted	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Junior Officer	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Senior Officer	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Gender	Male	15.1%	4.4%	4.0%	1.9%	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Female	14.4%	5.7%	5.5%	3.9%	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Race	Majority	13.7%	3.3%	3.4%	1.4%	10.4%	10.2%	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Minority	15.0%	4.7%	4.7%	3.0%	12.8%	12.0%	X	X	X	X	X	X
Deployment Status	Declined to Respond (DTR)	17.8%	6.8%	6.9%	4.5%	14.7%	15.2%	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Not Deployed	14.5%	4.4%	3.9%	2.1%	11.5%	11.4%	10.0%	12.3%	14.3%	X	X	X
	Yes (CONUS)	20.2%	8.4%	7.3%	7.1%	18.1%	19.1%	15.6%	18.4%	21.8%	X	X	X
	Yes (OCONUS)	16.7%	5.4%	6.5%	3.0%	13.9%	15.9%	12.8%	14.1%	16.9%	X	X	X

Note: DTR = Declined to Respond, CONUS = Continental United States, OCONUS = Outside of the Continental United States

## *Appendix 1. DEOCS Scale Items*

### Hazing Items

1. Newcomers are harassed or humiliated prior to being accepted into the organization.
2. To be accepted in this organization, members must participate in potentially dangerous activities that are not related to the mission.
3. Newcomers in this organization are pressured to engage in potentially harmful activities that are not related to the mission.

### Demeaning (Bullying) Behavior Items

1. Certain members are excessively teased to the point where they are unable to defend themselves.
2. Certain members are purposely excluded from social work group activities.
3. Certain members are frequently reminded of small errors or mistakes they have made, in an effort to belittle them.

## Appendix 2. Recommendations Summary

	<b>Revealed Challenge</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership may be unaware of this and similar study findings, hindering their ability to combat hazing and bullying in their units</li> </ul>	Disseminate this and similar reports to leadership and policy makers in order to bridge the gap in awareness and inform future policy. May require high level push for leaders take action on findings.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Females report lower perceptions of hazing, potentially indicating females are excluded from activities intended (though misguided and often harmful) to welcome new members</li> <li>Males experience more bullying at the junior enlisted rank whereas females experience more bullying at all other ranks</li> </ul>	Conduct research to more clearly identify bullying and hazing gender differences, causes, and remedies. Continue efforts to combat hazing, taking into account that male SMs may be more at risk, especially at lower ranks. Efforts to welcome female SMs into units may be needed in areas where females are excluded (intentionally or otherwise) or feel unwelcome. Determine who are the perpetrators of female bullying and take steps to discourage bullying of female SMs.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minority race SMs are more likely to perceive bullying and hazing in their units than majority race SMs</li> <li>SMs not reporting race have the highest perceptions of bullying and hazing</li> </ul>	Study the prevalence of bullying and hazing. If prevalence reports reveal a similar pattern (higher rates among racial minorities), implement strategies to combat hazing and bullying that focus on aiding racial minority SMs. Determine why SMs not reporting race have the highest rates of bullying and hazing. Determine if it is due to fear or retaliation and identification through disclosing race. Hazing and bullying may be used as a form of race-based discrimination. Determine who are the perpetrators of potential discrimination and their motivations.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is an enormous gap between leadership's perceptions of hazing and bullying in their units relative to junior enlisted SMs</li> </ul>	Dissemination of this and similar reports (see Rec. #1) will inform leaders of this substantial gap. Implement and enforce clear accountability practices regarding hazing and bullying policy and reporting. Identify units with especially large gaps between senior officers and junior enlisted SMs. Inform leaders of gaps and determine where in CoC information regarding bullying and hazing is lost (i.e., Why don't leaders know of bullying and hazing when junior enlisted do?).
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reported perceptions of bullying and hazing are highest among SMs deployed CONUS followed by OCONUS and lowest by those not deployed</li> </ul>	Determine if issues are localized to particular commands or types of commands. Investigate why perceptions are higher among CONUS and OCONUS than those not deployed. Take steps to counter bullying and hazing focused on these target areas.

*Note: SM = Service Member, CoC = Chain of Command CONUS, = Deployed in the Continental United States, OCONUS = Deployed Outside of the Continental United States*

## **Reference**

Government Accountability Office. (2016). DOD AND COAST GUARD: Actions Needed to Increase Oversight and Management Information on Hazing Incidents Involving Servicemembers (GAO-16-226). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Accountability Office.

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<b>14. ABSTRACT</b> Efforts to enhance the welfare of U.S. Military Service Members (SMs) have led to increased awareness of and attention to hazing and bullying behaviors perceived by SMs. Using the Defense Management Equal Opportunity Institute (DEOMI) Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS), perceptions of hazing and bullying among SMs of all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces (except Coast Guard) were explored. Findings of this study indicate SMs report perceptions of bullying at a substantially higher rate than hazing. Additionally, perceptions of bullying and hazing can vary considerably by gender, race, rank, and deployment status. Men are more likely to report perceptions of hazing within a unit than are women, whereas these differences were less clear-cut with regard to perceptions of bullying. Racial minorities SMs are more likely than the racial majority (White/Caucasian) to report perceptions of hazing and bullying; junior enlisted SMs report higher perceptions of hazing and bullying than senior enlisted SMs or officers; and SMs deployed within the Continental United States (CONUS) report higher perceptions of hazing and bullying than those not deployed or those deployed outside of the Continental United States (OCONUS). SMs who chose not to report their race had the highest p					
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